UC-NRLF
$C 25 445

YE18645

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/memoirsoflifepub00vestrich

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

Louis's

Eliza Mathews

MEMOIRS OF THE LIFE,

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ADVENTURES,

OF

MADAME VESTRIS:

OF THE

THEATRES ROYAL DRURY LANE, COVENT GARDEN, OLYMPIC AND HAYMARKET,

WITH

INTERESTING and AMUSING ANECDOTES

OF

CELEBRATED CHARACTERS IN THE FASHIONABLE WORLD,

DETAILING AN INTERESTING VARIETY OF

SINGULARLY CURIOUS AND AMUSING SCENES,

AS PERFORMED BEFORE AND BEHIND THE CURTAIN.

TO WHICH IS ADDED, THE

AMOROUS CONFESSIONS OF MADAME VESTRIS,

CAREFULLY SELECTED BY

CHARLES MOLLOY W——M——E, ESQ.,

FROM A

SERIES of LETTERS WRITTEN by MADAME

TO

HANDSOME JACK,

IN WHICH WILL BE FOUND

MOST CURIOUS ANECDOTES

OF

MANY EMINENT ROUES AND DEBAUCHEES OF THE DAY; WITH VARIOUS OTHERS OF PUBLIC NOTORIETY.

LONDON: PRINTED FOR THE BOOKSELLERS.
1839

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

V304
M53

THE

Life of Madame Vestris.

THE absurd falsehoods which have from time to time issued from the press, concerning this justly celebrated female, call imperatively for a memoir which shall give a correct account of her ancestry, birth, parentage, and connections, and which shall not be disfigured by a single word of untruth,—the writer, from a personal knowledge of the facts, having it in his power to challenge any contradiction.

The grandfather of Madame Vestris, the immortal F. Bartolozzi, was a native of Florence, and is well known to have been the greatest copperplate engraver the world ever produced. He lived many years in a state of comparative indigence, from which, however, he was extricated, in consequence of the fame he acquired by engraving the well-known beautiful copperplate of the Death of the Earl of Chatham, in the House of Lords, from a painting by Copley, the father of the present Baron Lyndhurst. For this admirable performance he received the sum of two thousand pounds.

After this (as he termed it) "sloice of dam gud loke" he continued to reside in England for some time in a state of comfort. At length he accepted very liberal offers from the Portuguese government to go to Lisbon, where, on his arrival, he was received by the lovers of the fine arts with open arms, and where his great talents soon procured for him the honour of knighthood. He died at Lisbon, shortly after he had completed the Portrait of the Prince Royal of Portugal, at the advanced age of 87 or 88 years.

It may be considered worthy of remark, in this place, that in consequence of Signor Bartolozzi having been so instrumental, by his vast talent, in promoting the trade in copperplate prints in this country, the British government offered him a pension of four hundred pounds a year, on the condition, however, that he should reside in England. But this offer coming after he had made his engagement with the Portuguese government, and indeed after he had sold off all his household and other property, he left England for ever.

But to return to the immediate subject of the present memoir: Sir F. Bartolozzi's only offspring, G. Bartolozzi, was born at Rome, and had come to England with his father. His mother was never in this country. At first, he followed the occupation of his father; but, not being able to endure confinement, he at length became a picture dealer, and general trader in everything that might present itself in his various journeys to and from Italy. Indeed, he was so very successful, that in a few years he accumulated an independent fortune, and purchased an estate at Venice, with a country residence, about fifty miles distant from that celebrated city.

There he expected to pass his life in peace and affluence; which indeed he would have done, but for the ravages of the French army under General Buonaparte, whose troops swept away all the valuables and movables that they could lay their hands on, without compunction, leaving the poor Venetians without a zechino, either in their bank or public funds. Thus was Signor Bartolozzi, among thousands of others, hurled in a moment from the height of prosperity into the very gulph of poverty and distress; and the only means which remained to him of procuring a subsistence, was the pursuit of the profession of his late father. He accordingly resumed it; but not meeting with the expected success he became involved, and was subject to many serious vicissitudes.

It is now time that we refer to Madame Bartolozzi, the mother of our heroine:

Mademoiselle Theresa Janson was the daughter of M. Janson, the first dancing master of his age in Germany, his native land. He was brought to this country by Earl Spencer and Lord Mulgrave, under whose patronage Miss Janson likewise immediately commenced teaching that beautiful and graceful art. Several of the very highest families benefitted by her instructions, and she was eminently successful; so much so, indeed, that she and her brother, Mr. L. Janson (who taught dancing only, because he was bred to it by paternal authority—music being his decided forte), realized rather more than two thousand pounds per annum. They resided at No. 14, Great Marlborough-street, and they were both musical pupils of the immortal Clementi.

Miss Janson was one of the most noted performers of her time on the pianoforte; but her father's income being sufficient, she, during his life, had no occasion to make use of her abilities further than to contribute to the amusement of her father's guests, who were generally persons of the very highest rank and fashion. Many costly entertainments were given by old Mr.

Janson; but this extravagant expenditure of his income at length brought him into difficulties, and he became insolvent.

About the commencement of the year 1795, Miss Theresa Janson was first introduced to Mr. G. Bartolozzi, at a musical party at Colonel Hamilton's, of pugilistic notoriety. Signor Bartolozzi was a very fine violin and tenor player, and could boast of having introduced into this country the very first double bass player in the world, Signor Dragonetti, the very prop of the orchestra of the Italian Opera House.

Miss Janson being a very fine girl, and known to possess great talent, it is no wonder that she had so many suitors. Among the rest, Mr. Rice, an eminent and wealthy East India merchant, made her an offer of his hand and fortune. But G. Bartolozzi was preferred and accepted by all parties.

The original intention of Signor Bartolozzi was to return immediately to his property in Italy; for the facts we are now recording occurred previously to the wreck of that gentleman's affairs; but he now changed his mind, and took a small house near that of the father of his intended bride, at Northend, near Walham-green, where he intended to reside, whilst he settled some affairs in England.

Old Mr. Janson's circumstances were every day growing still more desperate; but their real state was not made known to Bartolozzi. Janson had promised to give his daughter one hundred pounds to defray travelling charges; but Bartolozzi rather unexpectedly, and for the reasons above stated, requested the advance of the money to purchase some furniture for the house he had recently taken. This was a death blow to poor Janson, as it was utterly out of his power to comply with the request. Indeed it must have prevented the union altogether, but for the following occurrence:

Janson told his daughter that if anyone could be found to discount a bill for one hundred pounds, at six or eight months, he would give her the money. She was, however, unable to succeed in finding such a person. This caused her great affliction; when fortunately, the most intimate friend of her brother stepped in by chance, and he being made acquainted with the cause, said, "I will advance the money on your father's note at twelve months, provided your brother do indorse it." To this the brother having consented, a bill was drawn up the same evening, a cheque given for the amount (on Sir R. C. Glynn, by C. F. Rathart, Esq.); and the cash was presented to Bartolozzi the following morning, as if from old Janson's pocket.

A licence was now procured, and the marriage ceremony was

performed at St. James's church. It was again celebrated by a Catholic priest during the ensuing May.

After spending the honeymooon at the Star aud Garter, at Richmond, the bride and bridegroom went to their residence at Northend, where they resided for some time.

Here Mrs. Bartolozzi suffered a double miscarriage. In less than twelve months, they removed to the upper part of the house of Mr. Wetherell, upholsterer, No. 72, Dean-street, Soho, where our hero was born in the year 1797.

Many silly wagers and bets having been made respecting the exact age of Madame Vestris, all persons interested are hereby informed of the real date of her birth, and that she is consequently at this moment forty-one years of age. The writer of this memoir was in the house in question, at the very moment of her birth; and he had the infant prodigy placed in his arms, within a very few hours after her first appearance on the "STAGE OF LIFE." Being, moreover, a near relative of the lady, he ought surely to be considered a competent person to fix the date and place of her birth.

When Mrs. Bartolozzi was sufficiently recovered to bear the fatigue of travelling, she, with her husband and our heroine, left England for Paris, in company with a Mr. Thompson, a gentleman of great wealth, residing at Topsham.

From the capital of France, Mr. Bartolozzi proceeded to Vienna to prepare for the reception of his wife, whom he left under the care of the friend of the Janson family, the Marquis del Campo, ambassador to the Court of England, from the king of Naples.

In due time Mrs. Bartolozzi joined her husband at Vienna; and the family, soon after, going to Venice, remained there until the ravages of the French army (as before stated) had deprived Bartolozzi of his estates, and forced them to return to England. He took apartments in Oxford-street, the lower part of the house being occupied by Mr. (now Sir Peter) Laurie, who at that time carried on the business of a saddler and harness maker.

Our heroine, when about four years of age, was sent to school at Little Chelsea, where she received her first musical lessons from the celebrated Dr. Jay. Here, however, she did not long remain. Her masterly spirit, even at this period of her life, could not brook control; and having evinced a great inclination for vocal music, neither threats nor persuasion could prevail on her to pursue her studies on the pianoforte, which was soon entirely neglected.

The rich tones of her voice, as she warbled her untutored melo-

dies from room to room, together with the extraordinary graces of her person, which every day exhibited some new beauty, soon attracted the attention of several eminent professors, each of whom seemed to vie with the others in their anxiety to obtain her as a pupil. She received instructions from many gratuitously; but her principal knowledge was derived from Dominico Corri, and Rosetti, the soprano opera singer, under whose able tuition, she in a few months gave evident tokens of the great eminence at which she was destined afterwards to arrive. It was, however, owing, in a great measure, to her own industry and perseverance. She was indefatigable in her studies, and never lost an hour which she could appropriate to the purpose of improvement; and some months before she had completed her thirteenth year, she had sung at several of the concerts of the nobility, where her powers were greeted with the most enthusiastic shouts of admiration and applause.

At this time her father's chief means of existence were derived from teaching drawing to the younger members of several families of the first distinction, whose patronage would doubtless have been sufficient to have insured him all the necessaries and probably many of the luxuries of life, but for his inveterate love of the game of chess, at which he was considered an excellent player; and at this his favourite amusement, he lost a great deal of valuable time, which for the benefit of his family, he might have employed much better. To this, and to his love of company, which involved him in the habit of giving expensive parties, his ultimate downfall may in a great measure be attributed.

Meantime, Miss Bartolozzi continued to improve in beauty and accomplishments, till she reached her fifteenth year, when, at a party given by her father, she was introduced to Signor Armand Vestris, then principal dancer and ballet master to the Italian Opera House. From that moment he became a constant visitor at the house of Bartolozzi, who was shortly after called from London, by his friend and patron, Mr. Shepherd, an eminent cloth-worker, at Uley, in Gloucestershire. His absence was a fortunate incident for the affairs of our youthful lovers. Vestris sought every opportunity of meeting her alone; and as he was a young man of great personal attractions and polished address, it is no wonder that he succeeded in making an impression on her heart.

Mr. Bartolozzi never suspected the tender intimacy that subsisted between his daughter and his accomplished guest; and there is no knowing to what lengths the intimacy might have proceeded, had not Mr. Louis Janson, the maternal uncle of our heroine, written to Bartolozzi, stating what he had observed, and requesting his

speedy return. Bartolozzi, on the receipt of this letter, notwithstanding that he had made a very advantageous engagement to remain with Mr. Shepherd for some time, in order to instruct the younger branches of his family in music and drawing, immediately returned to London, and waiting on Vestris, demanded of him the nature of his attentions to his daughter. A satisfactory explanation took place, in conseqence of which, an early day was appointed for the marriage, which accordingly took place in St. Martin's Church (Jan. 28, 1814), when the bride wanted a few days to complete her sixteenth year; and, to render the union more binding, the ceremony was again performed by a Roman Catholic Priest.

Up to this period, the conduct of our heroine was most exemplary. Whatsoever the envenomed breath of slander may whisper to the contrary, we do not hesitate to affirm, that she came to her husband's arms a spotless virgin.

Shortly after her marriage, Madame Vestris made her first appearance on a stage in Winter's celebrated opera Il Ratto de Proserpino, with the greatest success. Vestris, intoxicated with vanity, launched out into every extravagance, in consequence of which his affairs became embarrassed, and before the close of the season he was arrested, and ultimately took the benefit of the Insolvent Act.

In order to avert the tedium of solitude during the time Vestris was incarcerated, our youthful bride passed the greater portion of her time, in company with a young unmarried lady named W—b—r, to whom she was warmly attached: she was about two years older than our heroine, but had a much maturer judgment in *peculiar* matters, and by way of airing, they frequently strolled through the parks together. They were one day returning from their walk, and just by the corner of Carlton-house garden wall, were met by a gentleman of elegant appearance, about forty years of age. He appeared struck with their persons and attempted to draw them into conversation; their first impulse was to run away from him, but his manners were so amiable and engaging, that they insensibly became less timid. His questions as to where they were going, if they were related, did they always go out together, &c., were made in so kind a manner, that they found it was impossible not to give him an answer; he seemed vastly surprised, on being informed by our heroine, that she was already married; but in order to disguise the truth, she gave him to understand that her husband was then on the Continent, upon business that might detain him for several weeks. His joy was most excessive—he appeared perfectly enchanted at having made

the acquaintance of two such charming creatures; but although he was equally polite to both, it was to our heroine that his conversation and attention was more particularly addressed. When they arrived at the passage under the treasury, this amiable gentleman left them, but not before securing a promise to meet him the next day in the park. Accordingly at the appointed time, our anxious friends were to be seen wending their way to the place of meeting. As they proceeded, Miss W—b—r made several remarks—such as, she thought the gentleman was too old; but her scruples vanished, when with a look of peculiar archness, her companion answered,—never mind Rose; young and silly as I am, it strikes me, that he will be the more discreet.

On entering the park, the fine dark eyes of Miss W—b—r, lighted up with pleasure, on perceiving their acquaintance of the previous day, accompanied by another gentleman younger than himself, of a most elegant form, and enchanting figure. Allow me, said he, advancing to meet them, allow me, ladies, to present my most intimate and particular friend; he is worthy, be assured, to complete our little society. The fair friends were for a moment, both struck dumb, at the very familiar way of disposing of them, as if they had been his secure property. Nevertheless, his success was sure: there was something about him which commanded their respect, giddy as they were, independent of the amorous desires with which their young bosoms were heaving.

The tender expressions of the Beaux, soon removed the restraint of their lovely companions, who innocently expressed their fear of being seen with them, by any of their acquaintances. This was exactly what the gallants wanted, and they immediately hastened to dissipate their alarm, by saying,—Ladies: Moments so precious ought not to be idly wasted; and fortune having been so favourable to us, as to bring us acquainted with so much beauty, we trust that you will accord us all the time you can spare, to pass in our company. This way, he cried, conducting them through a small gate which led into New-street, Spring-gardens, up a flight of steps; just there in this street, pointing with his finger, at a friend's house, I have provided a small refreshment, which I trust you will not refuse partaking of; there unseen, we may cement the friendship already so auspiciously commenced.

At this proposition, the females regarded each other anxiously, and quitting the arms of their unknown sparks, pronounced a refusal, but which I believe, they were both sorry for in secret. The gentlemen then conjured them to consent, protesting in the delicacy of their intentions; they still refused, but at the same time continued to approach the house; it was at the corner of a

court, leading out by the side of the Admiralty. After new prayers on the one part, and refusals on the other, partly supported hy a natural feeling of modesty, or, perhaps, a little fear, which they could not overcome; but which at last began to yield to their increased persuasions. Miss W—b—r first gave way, and entered the fatal door. Lucy Vestris like a young lamb, who seeing the example set, followed into the slaughter house, and the portal opened upon an hitherto unsullied wife, and spotless virgin, who, when it gave them egress, had very little to boast of on either head.

An old woman ushered them up stairs, where they found a table laid out with every delicacy; they took their seats, and a repast followed, of which none of the party stood in need; after which, the admirer of our heroine, prevailed on her to accompany him into an adjoining apartment, for the purpose of inspecting some exquisite paintings, which though beautifully executed, were of such a nature, that her youthful cheeks were suffused with blushes.

Her friend, Miss W—b—r, had not been idle, during the time occupied by the events we have been relating, but as we are not recording her adventures, suffice it to say, that the vain and giddy girl returned that evening to her parent's home, a perfect woman.

Previous to parting, a meeting was proposed for the next day at the same place, and George, for such was the name by which he requested her to call him; placed on her finger a brilliant ring, and dropped into her bosom, a purse, which, on her afterwards examining, she found to contain in bank notes and gold, upwards of fifty guineas. The partner of Miss W—b—r, was equally generous to her; and when they returned to their respective homes, they bewildered themselves in conjecture who their friends could really be, for two females, the liberality of their gifts appeared most extraordinary.

Madame and Miss W—b—r, as may be readily supposed, failed not to be at the rendezvous, again at the appointed time. They walked past the house several times, and began to feel excessively mortified, at finding their *friend* less punctual. At length the door opened, and they beheld the same woman who had waited on them the day before descend the steps. She immediately recognized, and accosting them, requested they would follow her. They, believing her to have been sent by their *friends*, complied, but to their astonishment were received not by the parties they expected but by a well-dressed lady, whose manners although engaging made them both feel a sensation of shame and anxiety at being thus introduced to a perfect stranger. She quickly perceived their embarrassment, to remove which, after conducting them into a parlour, she said, my dear young ladies, be without

fear—this is my house, where you will be respected. I trust to merit your greatest confidence. To day you will not see either of the two gentlemen you met yesterday, nor was it their intention to meet you again; you will not in the least regret their loss when you know how much they are unworthy of your consideration It is impossible to conceive the astonishment of the disappointed friends at this address. They would have directly retired, but Mrs. Green, for such was the lady's name, detained them, saying you have been deceived my lovely friends, but trust in me you shall be consoled—nay, do not blush, at your age and without experience it is very easy to become dupes to seducers like them —forget those ingrates, my dears, believe me, you should never attach yourself to any particular man, merely for the pleasures he procures you—the friend of to-day is as good as he of yesterday. I have lived much longer than you, follow my counsels—you will find them answer your purpose, the only favour I ask in return will be your friendship. In this manner she kept talking on, till interrupted by our heroine saying they were much obliged to her, but begged she would now permit them to bid her good day,

Stay, my dear young friends, she answered, when we are better acquainted you will judge differently; come, allow me to guide your pleasures—you will find here everything conducted with the greatest privacy, none can discover you here. Madame, replied Miss W—b—r, receive our thanks for all your obliging offers, but at present you must permit us to depart.—A moment my dear young friend, she said, addressing herself particularly to our heroine, tell me, have you a fortune,—no, indeed, madame, she replied, nothing of the kind. Ah, and she smiled, then a jewel or so will not spoil your toilet table, or a well filled purse prove a great incumbrance—besides do you think I don't know what you came here for yesterday? oh, I know all your little affairs, it is quite usual; believe me, many discreet women and girls, amiable and really as beautiful as yourselves, frequent my house—here they can enjoy pleasure in every variety and never fear satiety—come, no silly observations, and I'll engage you will thank me heartily when you have passed a short time with the gentlemen I intend introducing to you presently. But Madam, would it not be better for us, after being thus deceived, not to plunge deeper into the same fault? Fault, my love, it was the wisest thing you could do —but peace, my dear creatures, some one rings—come do not look like children. Two men of distinguished manners were then familiarly presented by Mrs. Green. After the introduction, she inquired how they were—oh, marvellous well, replied one of them, but are these the ladies you spoke of—indeed you have not belied

them in calling them charming, said the speaker, approaching Vestris—I never saw anything so interesting, and he politely kissed her cheek.—Gentlemen, said Mrs. Green, will you take some chocolate. Certainly, was the reply, but let it be upstairs. They were accordingly chaperoned into the very rooms which had been the scene of the previous day's frolic. Whilst the chocolate was preparing, their new acquaintances endeavoured to amuse the ladies with tender speeches, to which to tell the truth, they searcely made any reply, being both in great uncertainty as to what they should do. For an instant they retired to one of the window recesses, and in a low voice took each other's opinion, but at this moment, the refreshments coming in, their gallants conducted them to the table.

During the repast, a very *significant* conversation was kept up between Mrs. Green and the gentleman who had attached himself to our heroine, in half words and equivoques, which they alone comprehended. Presently Mrs. Green, who appeared to be in high spirits in having procured such valuable society for her friends, arose, saying, she was sure both couples would be very happy. On her retiring, Miss W—b—r's friend conducted her into an adjoining apartment—and the admirer of frail Lucy having locked the door, they were left to themselves.

In rather less than two hours our fair adventurers left the house on their return home. Satisfaction and delight beamed in the lovely eyes of Miss W—b—r, while on the contrary, those of Madame Vestris bore evident signs of discontent; and it was long before her companion could elicit from her the cause of her inquietude. Miss W—b—r spoke in the most rapturous terms of her admirer, and became every moment more pressing to be informed of the manner in which the lover of her friend had acquitted himself. At length she answered very pettishly—for heaven's sake ask no more questions, my companion was by no means the sort of man his appearance promised.

Mons. Vestris, after obtaining his liberty by the insolvent act, returned to his duties at the Opera House, and being naturally proud of his wife, and not liking her to be out of his sight, frequently took her with him behind the scenes, when he was called to attend a morning rehearsal.

One day she was thrown into the utmost confusion on entering the green-room with her husband, by perceiving the very two men who had first seduced Miss W—b—r and herself from the path of virtue, at Mrs. Green's. Luckily, being well wrapped up and having on a thick white veil, they had no opportunity of seeing her countenance; the deference with which they were treated

confirmed at once her previous surmises, that they were gentlemen of the first water; but words cannot describe her astonishment, when she discovered that *George* was no other than his late Majesty *George the Fourth*, and his companion was no less a personage than the Marquis of Hertford.

Vestris's continued attentions were such as not to afford any chance of a faux pas, although there were many whose rank allowed the *entre* behind the scenes of the opera, who cast sheep's eyes at her, and several direct and magnificent offers were made her as she stood at the side wings watching with interest the pirouettings of her husband; but whether it was owing to an increasing affection on her part towards him, or that some remains of virtue was whispering within her the folly and danger of her past conduct, we know not, but every offer was indignantly rejected, and Vestris, towards the close of the season, finding himself involved in new difficulties, left England for Paris, taking with him his wife and pupil, Miss Julia Mori. This lady was induced to accompany him, on the promise that he would procure for her an advantageous engagement. During the whole of the preceding season she had been a figurante at the Opera, and it was strongly surmised that many of the hours which should have been occupied in the practice of dancing, were passed in practices of a less difficult and more pleasing nature both to master and pupil.

At Calais, all the seats in the Diligence were engaged except one. Vestris, therefore, chose the cabriolet, which would contain three persons, Miss Mori, having a slight cold, preferred the vacant seat inside the Diligence—and that they might travel more at their ease, Vestris paid for the three places in the cabriolet and off they went to Paris. About eight or nine miles on the other side of Boulogne, the Diligence stopped for a minute or so at a place called Samers, and Monsieur, the conductor, coming out of the inn, after making his bow with the usual grimace, informed Vestris that a young lady was within, who had a most pressing occasion to get to Paris as quickly as possible, and would feel it the greatest favour if she could be permitted to pay for the vacant place in the cabriolet.

"Is she handsome?" enquired Vestris.

"Magnifique," answered the conductor.

"What do you say, Lucy—shall we?"—"Oh, certainly," said she; and the consent thus obtained, in the lady came, with a beautiful Blenheim lap dog under her arm. This was our heroine s first introduction to the present Lady Langford, then passing under the name of Louisa Villebois, but whose real name was Louisa Rhodes; she was then a most interesting woman, and gifted with a tongue that would wheedle the devil.

Well, off again went the Diligence. It then became a question where the little Blenheim should be stowed. Vestris was all politeness, and tying the little dog up in a handkerchief, pinned it over his head to the leather of the cabriolet, and before morning, was rewarded for his pains by being covered with a *saline shower*, which, falling from the little pet, deluged his cheek and bosom—the ladies could not restrain their laughter, and were nearly electrified with delight at his disgust whilst undergoing purification at the inn of Beauvais.

At length they arrived in Paris, and following Miss Villebois' example, took up their abode at the hotel Montmorency, on the boulevard of that name. The intimacy of Madame Vestris and Miss Villebois increased daily, although she could not but observe that his attentions to that lady became every day more pointed; she also remarked that his suspicions of his own countrymen were not so strong as of the English. Of this she said nothing being well pleased with his increased confidence. She however, mentioned it to Miss Villebois, who laughed and said,

"Ah, you have more right to be suspicious of him than he has of you."

"How so," enquired the other.

"Prom ise to keep your temper, I'll let you intoa secret."

The promise was made.

"Well, then, your spouse is making love to me."

"I thought as much, and am very glad to hear it; give him all the encouragement you think fit, only let me have an opportunity of finding him out."

"Agreed," said Villebois.

Soon after Vestris hired very comfortable lodgings in the Rue Lafitte, running out of the Italian Boulevard, in which they were soon installed. Miss Villebois, who was perfectly *au fait* in Paris, soon made our heroine acquainted with all the fashionable parts of the town, such as the Rue St. Honore, Palais Royal, Rue Rivoli, &c., &c. One day, as they were walking down the Rue de la Paix, on their way to the Tuileries Gardens, each dressed in the pink of fashion, and speaking as well as looking like native French women, whom should they meet but Liston and Fred Yates, buttoned up to the throat in their blue surtouts and black stocks, swaggering along, and doing a little bit of the military; luckily the veil of Madame Vestris was down, so they did not recognise her—Villebois was not known to them. Yates stopped, and believing them to be French ladies, with his usual impudence introduced himself to Villebois; Liston would have gone on, but Yates held him fast by the arm. After some general conversation,

Villebois, who knew them as well as Vestris, said to Yates—

"Militaire, je Crois ?"

"Oui, Mademoiselle," said Yates, with a long ha ! hum ! and rubbing up his black stock.

"Quel Regiment, Monsieur ?"

Yates turned his head to Liston, and speaking English, believing neither of them understood it, enquired—

"What regiment shall I tell her, John ?"

"Oh, damn her eyes," said Liston, "tell her the Guards, to be sure."

On this, Louisa, dropping them a most formal curtesy, to their great astonishment, replied in equally plain English, but a little more polished—

"Gentlemen, I am sorry to say we never form any acquaintance with the fourth regiment of Guards."

It is unnecessary to inform our readers that the fourth regiment of Guards signifies *black*-guards—and away the ladies went, leaving the two comedians dumbfoundered. Liston actually blushed—with regard to Yates, such a thing was entirely out of the question.

In the same house with the Vestrises resided Pellissier, the French comedian, who was one of the best tempered and most handsome of Frenchmen (Count D'Orsay not excepted), that Madame had ever seen.

Well, this Monsieur Pellissier occupied a suite of rooms on the floor above that of Vestris, and from the house forming an angle, as many houses do in Paris, his bedroom window was directly opposite to Madame's, on the floor above. His window opened in the centre from top to bottom, like those of a drawing-room, consequently, when standing at it, the whole of his fine statue-like person was visible. Knowing well the time when Vestris would be out, and perhaps from the peculiar knowledge and experience he must have possessed, he beckoned her upstairs. His handsome face, dark sparkling eyes, and agreeable gentleman-like person, were very great auxiliaries, and very great provocatives to a lady who never listened to reason whenever her passions or inclination urged her on. Fascinated by the sight, she hurried on her shawl and bonnet, and, pretending to go out, slipped upstairs, and found Pellissier standing at the door of his apartment ready to receive her :—in cases like these, delays are folly. Pellissier was prompt to act, and never did he play a part with such vigour and animation as he now displayed.

Although Pellissier was so well able to please a woman, like most handsome actors, he was a vain-boasting, empty-headed fool,

and could not conceal his satisfaction at having cuckolded Vestris. One evening, whilst the whole party were standing in the green room of the Academie Royale, Pellissier held up the two fore-fingers of his right hand just over the back part of Monsieur Vestris's head, so as to represent horns; not considering that his victim stood before a large mirror, in which the whole of the impudent proceeding was instantly detected. Vestris took no notice for the moment; but the result was, that after carefully watching, Madame was at last caught in flagitium "delinquo;" but not before she had attained sufficient evidence of his adultery both with his pupil Julia Mori and Miss Villebois, afterwards Lady Langford.

Shortly after this, Vestris having secured for himself and his pupil an engagement of eight years at Naples, left his young and fascinating bride in Paris entirely without protection or support, in the second year of their marriage, and where she was compelled to accept an engagement at several of the Parisian theatres. At one of which (we believe the Odeon), she first beheld Windham Anstruther, who paid her every attention, and so far insinuated himself into her good graces as to draw from her the avowal of a wish that she had met with him at an earlier period, while both her hand and heart were disengaged.

Anstruther, who had heard nothing of our heroine's misconduct, and fervently believing that he himself was the first and only man who had succeeded in making an impression on her heart, endeavoured to convince her of the folly of remaining constant to a husband who had so cruelly deserted her, but all in vain. So excellent an actress was she, that believing her virtue was impregnable, he pretended to have discovered a flaw in her marriage articles, by which in England the union would be declared null and void. He even assured her that he had sufficient influence to procure the passing of a bill which would release her from her vows, when he would instantly make her his wife. By arguments such as these she finally suffered herself to be persuaded, and accepted his protection. A child (the only one she ever bore) was the consequence of this connection; it died, however, at an early age.

On arriving in England they came to London, and took apartments at Mr. Harrison's, the New Hummums Tavern, in Covent Garden, and hired them under the name of Mr. and Mrs. Anstruther.

It does not appear that Mr. or Mrs. Bartolozzi evinced any resentment at the conduct of their daughter. On the contrary, Mrs. Bartolozzi, for a time, was often heard to speak of Anstruther

in the most respectful terms. She, however, changed her opinion shortly after his arrival in England, in consequence of the following affair :—

It seems that Anstruther, in a letter written to Mrs. Bartolozzi from Paris, had promised to present her, on his reaching England, with two hundred pounds, for the purpose of redeeming certain jewels, &c., which she had been compelled to pledge. But when she reminded him of his promise, though he acknowledged the letter, yet he desired her to produce it, as he was convinced she was mistaken as to the amount. The letter, however, had been long since destroyed; upon her stating which he handed her a twenty pound note, saying, "There, mother-in-law, you must have read the cipher twice!" This disappointment she never forgave; and instead of the "generous, kind soul," he was now "a mean, shabby fellow, whose word was not worth one single dump!"

Anstruther's sole dependence, at this time, was on an allowance from his mother, and on the liberality of his elder brother; which being very inadequate to support him in the extravagant style in which he was living with our heroine at the Hummums, he found himself, in a short time, greatly involved in debt, and in consequence he was arrested and conveyed to the King's Bench He afterwards took the Rules, and removed to a lodging within their limits, in Melina Place, Lambeth. During this time Madame Vestris, by her professional exertions, greatly contributed to their mutual support; but finding that, notwithstanding the change in the state of his affairs, he still continued the same thoughtless extravagance, to such an excess that, towards the end of each week, they were frequently at a loss for the wherewithal even to provide a comfortable meal (though her salary was considerable). She determined on a separation; and, after some angry words had been exchanged, they parted.

She then took lodgings for herself, mother, and sister, in Bridges Street, Covent Garden. This she did on her sister's account, to whom she was warmly attached; and, being perfectly aware that her mother would do anything for money, and scruple not even to sacrifice her own child to the highest bidder, she determined to keep a watchful eye upon her.

Here she had resided but a very short time, when Elliston, struck with her extraordinary beauty, a recommendation of greater moment with him than the most brilliant talents, offered her very liberal terms, for the season he was then commencing at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. She selected the part of Zella in the Siege of Belgrade for her debut, and was received

with universal shouts of applause by a house crowded to suffocation in every part. This important occurrence in the life of our heroine took place on the 18th of February, 1819. This was followed by many other characters of similar rank, in all of which she was well received; but it was reserved for Giovanni, in the musical burletta of "Giovanni in London," to call forth reiterated bursts of applause, and cause Fame to sound her trumpet with unusual force, so that the treasury of old Drury experienced the beneficial effect.

After this, she filled the character of Captain Macheath with equal *eclat;* it may, therefore, be imagined, she did not suffer from the annoyance of female delicacy; no timidity or obstrusive modesty clouded her powers; but entire self-possession gave to each part its full force; nor was a look, inuendo, or attitude wanting to pourtray the accomplished rake or libertine highwayman.

Madame Vestris' fame soon spread, and brought to her offers of the most lucrative nature from the Birmingham, Edinburgh, and other theatres, where she performed in succession.

To make her stick to the breeches, Mr. Elliston voluntarily raised her salary, and her Macheath continued to attract overflowing houses. She was sensible of the hold she had got of the public opinion, and very wisely did not make bad use of it. She never shammed sick to render herself important, and see what effect disappointment would have upon the town—a common trick with many; one of our first-rate singers in particular. Vestris was always found at her post, and did justice to that public which so nobly patronized her.

At the close of the season our heroine, now exalted on the pinnacle of fame, retired into a private station to repose upon her laurels, and prepare for fresh achievements.

The reader will be well aware that with all this fame and fortune pouring upon her, Madame did not want for lovers. No! she was beset by them on every side; they swarmed round her like flies round a honey-pot on a day in June. The papers teemed with verses in her praise, and presents from unknown persons came daily to her door.

She conducted herself with good generalship, and though every one knew she had left her husband, no one was certain she would admit of a lover.

However, Captain Best—and who has not heard of him?—managed to scrape an acquaintance with our heroine, and hovered around her like an ignus fatuus. He paid for all her singing and dancing masters who attended her in Brydges-street, and also for

those who waited upon her sister Josephine. I do not like to give a man a worse name than he deserves, but this captain's connection with these two sisters does not do honour to his name. There are some people not squeamish, so far as regards relationship in connection.

This extraordinary character assumed an influence over Madame's mind, which perhaps she was not aware of. He quite imperceptibly stole into her good graces; and he accompanied her in all her provincial engagements (for she had accepted of many by the advice of her friend), and was to her as an immoral Mentor,—for virtuous ideas never flowed from a polluted source.

It was found convenient for the circumstances of Madam Vestris, that country air would do her service, and she accordingly accepted of an engagement at Manchester, to play for seven nights for one hundred pounds.

At Manchester our heroine was received with decided approbation. It was not known that she was going to appear till four in the afternoon, and the house was literally besieged by applicants for entrance.

The manager, a good-humoured fellow, gave every facility to his new actress, and her reception was such that it fully answered his expectations. The receipts of the house were four hundred pounds, a sum which had never been received before, and astonished the treasurer, old Tom Carleton.

On the following day the proprietor waited on Madame Vestris and presented her with a nosegay of roses and different flowers. She received it very kindly, and on laying it on her toilet, out dropped thirty guineas. She was so pleased with this manner of paying her a compliment, that she sat down and wrote a note, of which the following is a verbatim copy :—

"DEAR SIR,—I will play to-night as 'Cowslip,' in 'The Agreeable Surprize,'—and to-morrow, as 'Don Giovanni.' You are a queer fellow—I wish to oblige you. VESTRIS."

The succeeding nights were all overflowing houses, and the Manchester Theatre became the life and soul of the town.

At Manchester she succeeded in gaining public estimation, but she did not in private life hold forth her powers of mimicking virtue upon the stage. Captain Best abandoned our heroine at Manchester, and travelled off to London with Lady Bennet—a lady whose husband has of late become notorious.

There was nothing on the part of Madame Vestris which would have given the smallest countenance for such a separation. But Best wanted money, and would have linked himself to the devil

to have got it. Vestris had a great regard for him, and after his absence she kept her room, and even her bed, for some days.

She was aroused from her reverie by Lord Derby; he insisted upon her appearing, and enforced his arguments by the joyful appearance of a fifty pound bank-note. Madame Vestris arose from her lethargy, and began to delight the town as usual. The house was every night full, and the managers were happy.

I may be expected to say something on the abdication of Captain Best; he merely left our heroine because Lady Bennett could pay him better. He did not reckon well, for the lady left him for Mr. Osborne, and he had no remedy but to 'grin and bear it.'

At Manchester our heroine became acquainted with Major Brookes, and this unfortunate man was her cicisbeo for several months. He was called out and shot, a circumstance too well known to be dilated upon. Madame Vestris had nothing to do with it; the quarrel was one of a private nature, and the deadly settlement rested only with the two persons concerned.

From Manchester our heroine went to Liverpool, and was received into the mansion of Colonel Atherton, at Walton Hall. He gave her his protection, and ensured her his patronage. He had then the command of the Liverpool Volunteer Cavalry, and his name went a great way in recommendation of any sort.

The part that Madame Vestris chose for her first exhibition was one in which she has not figured of late,—'Cowslip,' in 'the Agreeable Surprise.' Breeches then were not in her contemplation, and being so much admired in petticoats, she had no idea of changing her dress. I am one of those who think very little of this 'Cowslip'—it is not natural, and never gives delight; it is an abortion of the author's brain; he thrusts it into the farce merely as a stop-gap; it filled up his scenes and he was content. It ought never to be repeated.

One of the best parts that Madame Vestris ever performed is the 'Page,' in the 'Marriage of Figaro.' But she delights so much in *outre* affairs, that it is impossible to confine her to the legitimate drama.

At Liverpool she came forth as 'Macheath,' and, as might be expected, attracted all the taste of the town. She was placarded on every wall, and her likeness stuck in the window of every print-shop. The town rang with her praises, and for twenty-seven nights Macheath was received with cheers by a Liverpool audience. She did not attempt any other breeches character, and left Liverpool with a tolerably fair fame.

Her performances at the theatre delighted all, and she had a benefit which produced her £500.

On leaving the theatre she had a slight altercation with Lord Derby, and he swore she should not depart before the holidays. How it was settled I do not know, but she remained at the castle three weeks after her engagement at the theatre had expired.

Lord Derby was a very rum fellow; he married an actress, and had all his life been acting. But it is no matter, I have nothing to do with him, and must push on in my old way.

On her appearance at Liverpool a singular circumstance occurred:—Sir Eyre Coote sat in a box near the stage, and he left it with haste; appearing behind the scenes, he asked for Madame Vestris; she made her appearance, and he presented her with a bank-note of twenty pounds value. This action needs no comment. Our heroine, I believe, never, before or afterwards, saw the donor.

No sooner had Madame Vestris concluded her engagement at Liverpool than she started for Birmingham, where she appeared, and was most kindly received. She had the fortune to be encored twice, and became such a favourite that the whole town echoed her praise. Her first appearance was as 'Macheath,' and she gained thunders of applause.

It was not, however, her performance of 'Macheath,' that fixed her reputation with the town upon a basis not to be shaken, it only prepared the way for her future fame. When she came forward in 'Don Giovanni,' she electrified the town, and every evening hundreds went from the doors of the theatre disappointed at refusing admittance.

As I before remarked, her friend Captain Best was the man to whom she was indebted for her musical education being completed, and, after the success of her 'Don Giovanni in London,' she could have gone to any theatre in the country upon her own terms.

During her journey to the north, Captain Best attended her very closely, yet at Manchester he gave her the go-by, and took up with another lady. The eclat that she had gained in London followed her into the country, and at Liverpool and Dublin she made most excellent harvests, and returned to London with an overflowing purse.

For a length of time discord had been raging betwixt our heroine and her mother—a lady by no means calculated to secure the estimation of her children, or any other person. She did not like living alone, and took unto herself a young husband, named Burke. He was an Irishman, and only married her from an idea that she possessed some property—he soon found out his mistake, and took French leave, nor even said 'Farewell.'

This wedding so much displeased the Vestris, that she gutted

the house in Brydges Street, and went to live at a boot-maker's in Newport Street; whether he had got the length of her foot, I am not aware, but it was a suspicious place for her to take up her abode. Moreover, this boot-maker was a gallant man, and had to support five natural children, which he had by five different servant girls. A very virtuous woman would not have relished occupying his lodgings. But I can only surmise upon this occasion, and therefore drop it as a thing undefinable.

The young Josephine of course remained with her mother, and Madame Vestris was their chief support. She used almost every day to call and take her sister out; as to her mother she totally neglected her, and I believe did not speak to her once in a week. Mrs. Burke could not live very comfortably upon the pittance allowed by her daughter, and her own charms were too old for speculation; she therefore resolved to try what her youngest child could do.

I apprehend there is not one individual acquainted with the town who has not heard of the noble Lord Petersham, the present Earl of Harrington, so celebrated for his elegant manner of bowing, and his whiskers and mustachios. He had long danced attendance upon the little pretty Josephine, whom he wished to entrap in his snares; but the little coquette always kept him in play, but never would buckle to. It is a fact which at the time made much noise; all the papers of the day were filled by the circumstances.

It was said, the mother with an inhumanity and total want of feeling, bartered with Lord Petersham to dispose of her child; she was then not 14 years of age, and consequently could only be designated a child. The bargain was for five hundred pounds, three of which were paid down upon the nail, and a time appointed, but the young lady resisted and screamed violently, arousing the neighbours with her cries, so that the noble Lord was glad to make a precipitate retreat, execrating the old mother, and regretting his three hundred pounds.

Madame Vestris made herself very busy upon this strange occasion, and took her sister away from her mother. Captain Best also made himself very busy, and carried letters to and from Petersham to Madame Burke and Josephine: several of them were published at the time. The following are the only ones of consequence worth being recorded in this narrative :—

TO MRS. BURKE, BRYDGES STREET.

DEAR MADAM,—I had no wish to do anything improper to your daughter; she has forgiven me, and I am ready to receive her, if she choose to place herself voluntarily under my protection.

PETERSHAM.

HUNGERFORD COFFEE HOUSE—SUNDAY MORNING.

Captain Best's compliments to Mrs. Burke, and would be glad to see her on 'she knows what,' at two o'clock this afternoon. It may all be settled without the public knowing anything about it; they have known more about it than there was any occasion, if discretion had been used. Mrs. Burke, Brydges Street.

TO JOSEPHINE BARTOLOZZI—MONDAY MORNING.

MY DEAR GIRL,—I would be very happy to see you, at any time to-day, at the New Hummums. You know how I love you, and that I never meant to offend you; but under peculiar circumstances I could not refrain from acting as I did. You should be less pretty if you expect to escape a lover's passionate addresses in private. Pray do not disappoint me. PETERSHAM.

PALL MALL.

DEAR JOS.—Why delay, after saying you would come. I will be at Spring Gardens all the afternoon; let your wardrobe go to the devil, we can purchase another. I think '*she*' has no cause to grumble, but has been too well paid. If she attempts to molest you after you are with me, I will set Fletcher at her, and then she must hold her peace. Enclosed you have a trifle, and make all the haste you can. I am miserable by day, and at night cannot sleep for dreaming about you.

Yours sincerely,

To my dear girl. PETERSHAM

SPRING GARDEN TERRACE—15TH MID-DAY

MY DEAR JOS.—You have totally disappointed me. Surely when we parted in Leicester Square, it was clearly understood upon what terms we were to meet again. There can be no necessity for your remaining with your mother, when your sister offers her house as an asylum until you choose to come to me, where you know you will be secure, and, I hope, happy. You cannot doubt my honour—or if you want my hand you shall have it. Pray let me see you this day, at five o'clock, under the Opera House Arcade. I will do anything you can wish—but no more of your mother.

Yours affectionately,

To my dear girl. PETERSHAM.

There were a great many more letters published, but none of any consequence except the above.

Whether the noble lord's epistolary correspondence, or his verbal eloquence prevailed, is not known unto me, but that he did succeed was evident, for a few days after the famous 'fracas,' (when the public papers teemed with execrations against Mother

Burke and the noble lord,) the young lady, whose case had excited so much sympathy, appeared in the stage box at Drury Lane Theatre, with her sister and Lord Petersham.

There was no *sham* upon this occasion; all was reality, and the world at once gave the Vestris credit for having settled the point in a manner peculiar to herself, leaving the old woman out of the question. In fact, the mistake seems, in the first instance, to have been in his lordship's having presented the three hundred pounds to the mother instead of the daughter. No woman likes to be sold by another, however willing she may be to sell herself.

The Vestris soon procured an engagement at the King's Theatre on the most advantageous terms, and for several seasons she was the leading star of the west. She, however, kept two strings to her bow, and formed an engagement at the Haymarket with her early friend, Morris, where she took much better than at the Opera; her 'Macheath' and 'Don Giovanni' being the chief attraction; but of late she has appeared as the 'Page Victor,' with uncommon success. In 1823, she removed from Newport Street, to Curzon Street, Mayfair, the scene of many an odd freak, which we shall come to.

It must not be forgotten, that there was then engaged at the Italian Opera, a Mr. Charles Vestris, and his lady, both persons of truly excellent character; and a very happy couple. The similarity of names occasioned many a mistake, and some of them are worth relating.

One evening, in the green-room, a letter was brought to Mrs. Charles Vestris, by the call-boy of the house? she perceived it was franked by a peer—and she broke it open, not much attending to the direction. A small paper dropt out of the letter, which Charles Vestris picked up; it was a bank-note for six hundred pounds, and alarmed the dancing hero not a little.

He snatched the paper from the hand of his wife and read it with horror. The tenor of it was thus:—

HOLYHEAD, MARCH 18TH, 1822.

MY DEAR CHILD,—How distressed was I at leaving town without being able to take leave of you; it was your fault, not mine; you could have kept at home during the early part of the day. I expect to return in about a month, and till then you must make yourself easy. I enclose you a note which I put in my pocket-book on the Saturday morning, purposely for your use, but you missed it by not keeping your word. You may judge of my affection for you when I declare I have not left myself ten pounds, after sending you the enclosure. I must borrow from Skinner, until I reach Dublin, if the wind should hold foul as it does at

present. I will not forget the pebbles, but I doubt if they can be got sufficiently good for the necklace. Should I come through Edinburgh I will try to get you some Cairngorm pebbles of the yellow kind; they are more splendid than the Brazilian diamonds sold by Mawe, in the Strand, and much about the same price. Let me have a letter from you on receipt of this, and direct it to me, at Glenarm Castle—I calculate I shall be there ten days or a fortnight; and you can also write to me at Cork, where I am obliged to remain for a week, and pay respects to all the d—d tradesmen and their wives, or my son will lose his election. I requested Moore to write me a song to your favourite tune; he promised and did not perform—it is his way—he is selfish in the extreme, and is so overpaid for his writings he imagines there is none like him. You may go to Hamlet's, if you like, and get the teapot; show him this, and he will place it to my account; do not pay him on any terms, for I believe he owed me a balance since our last settlement. I hope you will not go any more to Highgate; the fellow is, at best, but a coachmaker, and you will never make anything of him, for he is mean beyond all expression, and if I am not misinformed will soon appear in the Gazette. Pray take care of your health, and do not leave off the cork soles, they will keep you from cold, and are neither ugly nor inconvenient. God bless you. Adieu. BELMORE.

P.S.—I mean to have a slap at Cathcart, if I meet him in Dublin, but only as far as talking goes, for he is not worth powder and shot.

To Madame Vestris, Tichfield Street.

This letter had been duly delivered, and was carried to the Theatre by a servant, who delivered it to the usual green-room messenger. The contents of the above letter convinced Mr. C. Vestris that it was not for his wife;—he well knew for whom it was meant, nevertheless he pocketed the bank-note, and refused to surrender it, though he handed the letter to the fair lady for whom it was intended. The law was resorted to upon this occasion, but in the mean time, the noble lord who had sent the note arrived in London, and it was delivered up to her for whom it was intended.

At the house in Curzon Street, May Fair, Madame kept three servants in the character of 'maids,' beside a cook and four menials in livery. All this required cash in abundance, and her friend found it—he was no churl, and she always took care to let the capital accumulate which was earned by her industry. Attended by her black servant she sported away at the theatre, and was seldom attended by her friend.

Her 'Don Giovanni' attracted most crowded houses, and she had her salary at the Haymarket raised to twenty-five pounds per night, and she often performed three and four times during the week.

She was very partial at one time to sauntering under the façade of the Opera House, with that truly good christian every one knew, y'clept Charles Wright; whether she loved him or his claret, I do not know—nor do I care.

One evening, after the Opera was over, she remained to rather an early hour in the morning, and was escorted home by Lord Benning and Sir Francis Leforey; what business these honourable men had with the lady at such an out of the way hour of the night may be guessed at; but certes they went home with her, and found all her servants in bed. This was 'not very respectful,' as we have it in the farce of 'Raising the Wind,' and the consequences were rather disastrous. The parlour window was discovered to be open, and on proceeding to her bedchamber, the lady found her escrutoire had been opened, and all her jewels pilfered, to the amount of two thousand pounds.

The robber had passed the butler's pantry, where fifteen hundred pounds worth of plate was deposited, and also the drawing-room, where a gold repeater and some trinkets lay, worth three hundred guineas. He proceeded to the lady's sleeping apartment, and after securing her jewels, had gone down and made his exit again by the window.

The noble Lord and the Baronet went to Bow Street, and called sir Richard Birnie out of his bed, who gave directions for a look out after the robber. The account appeared in the newspapers, but no more; there were no handbills published offering a reward, nor was anything more ever heard of the transaction.

The robber must have been well acquainted with the premises to open the windows by a spring so cleverly, and find his way to her bedroom with such facility. Why she held her tongue upon the occasion nobody knows, but for a certainty, Madame put up with her loss, and never after opened her lips upon the transaction.

There was a report that the person who committed this depredation was Captain T———, the friend of Lord Byron; who after his death went and joined the Turks, and was murdered in a grove near Athens. I have no authority for this, but the common report that was then ripe upon the town.

These things are not to be believed on any one's 'ipse dixit,' but it must be admitted, that it was more likely a friend than a foe that penetrated to the lady's chamber, or she would not so

soon have become silent on the subject. This is one of the many stories told of Madame, I am inclined to attribute her forbearance to her goodness of heart; she had no wish to prosecute those for whom she once had a friendship—for her heart is really good.

Her first trip after this was to Liverpool; she succeeded a general favourite, Miss Sarah Booth, but her fame had gone before her, and she was, even before her appearance, stamped as a favourite of the town. At Liverpool it is not of much consequence to date her very great notoriety; suffice it to say, that young Foster was her very great friend, and patronized her the whole season.

Madame now began to attach herself entirely to the Opera, and her friends much less attended her. I do not say that she had acted ill to them, but she had not done well, and had, in truth, broken faith with all her followers. She had such good engagements, that she cared little for faith, and made an engagement which she never executed. For instance, she never went to the Haymarket, though she was bound to do so; and when Morris told her she had forfeited her engagement, 'Very well,' said she, 'go to Coutts's and receive the penalty.' It was three hundred pounds. She never did appear in that season at the Haymarket, and of course paid the fine.

There was, at the time of this affair, a man upon the town, named Dick Wilson; he had gained much money by his gambling transactions, and contrived to keep up a tolerable good name; how he managed it I do not know, but so it was the case. I believe, if a man can only keep up outward appearances, no one will enquire into his internal concerns.

Dick had a fine handsome person and elegant manners to dispose of, and he took care to do so to the best advantage. He met our heroine one night very late, when a man was accosting her very rudely. Dick, I suppose from principle, at once knocked him down, and thence escorted the lady home.

Effects and causes are very widely different from each other. Dick, on a certainty, did not emerge from the dwelling in Curzon-street on that night, and next day they were seen travelling arm in arm to the rehearsal!

Some fellows possess the devil's luck and their own; and Love appears to tumble by chance on those who least merit his favours. Whatever was the reason I am not capable of telling, but the gentleman enjoyed the lady's good graces for several months, and was her constant attendant at the Opera and Haymarket Theatre. He was so polite, that no woman would have refused his attention. Poor Dick was considered as 'a happy

man,' until one day he was found near the Tower afloat on the river, and 'dead as a herring.' An inquest was held upon his body, and a verdict returned of 'found drowned.'

Madame, when she was told of Dick's death, instantly ordered his funeral obsequies to be performed at Rotherhithe Church, with all due decency. But she was never heard to express a word of regret for his death, or a wish for his being alive. I suppose she entertained neither; nor had a single wish to perform '*The Dead Alive.*'

We have been for some time sporting on the errors and failings of an amiable woman; let me call the attention of the reader to a more serious subject,—one which does honour to the heart of our heroine, and proves, whatever her course of life may have been, she never lost the opportunity of doing an act of kindness.

She had in her walks picked up a little girl called Emma. This little child was every way an interesting creature, and soon became nearly domesticated at her house. Her parents were in an humble condition, and soon after this circumstance died. This did not abate the kind attention of Madame, who continued attached to the child, and took it to her home, where she nursed it as a mother. I know not how her time was now occupied, but believe she had no engagement for more than a year, nor had she any occasion to seek one. The infant which she now took under her care, was, like Billy Austin with the late Queen, supposed to be her own; but it was not the case. She never had a child that lived, and it is not very probable she will now; but for four years she paid more attention to it than if it had been her own, and when it died saw it respectfully buried, and put on mourning.

I know from experience how easily a person becomes attached to children when about four or five years of age, their artless prattling is so interesting, and their smiles so endearing, that they wind round the heart as though they were bound to it by the most tender ties.

Not long after this event, Madame procured an engagement in Dublin, where she no sooner appeared than she fascinated all the Paddies. In breeches, they pronounced her a perfect Adonis, or Ganymede; fitted to be the lover of Venus, or the cup-bearer to Jove; and in perfect petticoats, they avowed she was a perfect angel. I apprehend, Mahomet's angels, (the houris) and Irish angels, are of the same class; partaking of flesh and blood, and indulging in all the tender passions to an excess.

Madame had not long been on the Dublin boards, ere she had a host of lovers in her train, and was often seen under the pillars

of the Parliament House—I beg pardon, I mean no offence—the Bank; for old Ireland no longer boasts the honour of holding in her arms a corrupt set of her representatives—men who would—

> "Their crimes on government still lay,
> And pawn their sordid souls for pay."

In Dublin she most assuredly formed a connection which might have led to matrimony if she had pleased. But it did not, and she kept on 'the even tenor of her way.'

There was a young lord at this time much attached to our heroine; he was on the point of marriage with the daughter of the prime minister of England; and even a day had been named. His dashing through the capital of Hibernia with the lady in his barouche, knocked up all, and a family meeting was the consequence. It ended very well, and indeed an agreement she held in her hand, for two thousand pounds, she voluntarily gave up, and left to the generosity of the family what should be done for her.

Not anything was ever done, and she left Dublin minus in every thing but her charms. These were rather upon the increase, and in proportion as she became more plump, she became more beautiful.

She went away from Dublin to the north of Ireland, and at Belfast had the constant patronage of the noble Marquis of Donegal.

At Belfast she was the object of universal admiration, and Mr. Jocelyn's son became much attached to her.—I knew him well; he had not a great deal of intellect, nor was he well read in anything but sporting anecdotes, but he had a good heart, and never missed an opportunity of performing a good action.

He had a country seat near the town of Carrickfergus; it was a mere cottage, situated on a ledge of rocks, overlooking the sea. It is not five miles distant from the residence of Sir George Hill, the representative of the city of Londonderry. To this cottage madame attended him, and spent a whole summer. She used to come to Belfast every Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday to perform, and made a tolerably rich harvest.

She visited the city of Londonderry, and was met there with much approbation. She enjoyed the patronage of Mr. Anderson and Alderman Lackey, and was also highly noticed by the Mac Causlands of Balmore. There she visited the families of Hart and Thompson, and General Hart, the member of the then parliament, was particular in his attentions to her.

A curious circumstance happened on the coast. Madame was always partial to fishing, and went out one morning to throw a line, in company with Captain Thompson, of Green Cottage. It

came on to rain, and they took shelter under a tilted boat. Young Jocelyn, I suppose, had some suspicion of his darling, and took a peep; he did not relish the sight; and two days after gave Captain Thompson a civil dismissal from his residence. Madame was not dismissed.

"It is difficult to cut our female connections; we loath and linger upon them, until we are almost persuaded they are the virtuous characters they assume, and that we have been wrong in our opinion."

She went to Nelson's Hotel with Jocelyn, and remained there for three months. It was on the Bankside that the duel was fought between Jocelyn and Capt. Thompson. Dr. Hamilton bore the challenge to Thompson, who was in bed; he read it; and said, 'Why, I do not know for what I am to fight him, but since he has called me out, damme me, I'll meet him; say eleven o'clock.' 'Would not, sir,' said the doctor, who was one of the most kind hearted fellows I ever knew (he once saved my life by medical skill), 'an apology save the danger of this meeting?' 'Damn danger, I never knew him,' replied the Captain, 'I'll have a fly at him, at eleven, on the Bankside.' 'Will you, sir?' 'I will, by the sacred God!' This was an oath of his he used on board ship, and never broke. A sailor called up for an offence was certain of punishment when he heard the above oath. He once flew in a passion with the writer, and swore he would try him by a court-martial; he pledged it with the same oath. I was tried and acquitted, with a slight reprimand. Captain Thompson I met next day, when I had been appointed first lieutenant of the Clyde; we were both in full uniform; I touched my hat, as in duty bound; he came up and shook me by the hand, and afterwards we were good friends, and fought side by side at the battle in Basque Roads.

He met Jocelyn on the Bankside, and had for his second, little Lyons, then on the impress service. He had certainly committed a 'faux pas,' but he resolutely declared to all around that, if asked for an apology for anything said or done, he would willingly have made it, but having been called out, he would, right or wrong, never apologize.'

The consequences of the duel are well known, and the newspaper tales of Madame's standing on the walls of Londonderry, and witnessing it, are quite untrue. The duel took place beyond the Rope-walk, and could not be seen from the walls; and our heroine was, at the time, thirty miles from the spot, being on a visit with Captain Hill, at his villa, near Coleraine. Captain Hill was not then, as he is now, Collector of the Port of London-

derry, but he entertained Madame at this time for the sole purpose of keeping her out of the way of the duel.

Jocelyn was not famed for courage, and had once submitted to be kicked out of a public company; he however displayed, on this occasion, some spirit, and stood a brace of shots manfully; he fell by the third, and Captain Thompson saw him conveyed to the hotel; he was there carefully attended by three medical men, but died on the third day, and that is all.

Nothing heroical attended his death, nor anything mean; he slumbered into eternity, and Madame expressed some small concern for his untimely end. He deserved a better fate,—but young men are fools where women come in the way. He had a tolerably good fortune, and two beautiful sisters, who are since married to peers. I have seen him on many occasions, and never drove out of his way, except by the influence of wine. He has displayed his talents in verse more than once, and some of his lines written upon our heroine are worthy of being preserved from oblivion.

From the time that Madame took up her abode in Curzon-street, May Fair, she launched out into extravagancies most unbounded. Her equipage was very gay, and she dashed about town more like a duchess than an actress. A fortune of eleven thousands was melted down to not so many hundreds, in a very few years, and her favoured lover is now, in a great degree dependent upon her for support.

The establishment in Curzon Street, May Fair, was on a most extravagant scale, and parties were given by Madame every evening when she had no employment at 'the treatment of the people,' as Lord Byron called theatrical performances. Men of all ranks attended her levees; and her protector, who furnished the means became only a 'shadow and a name.'

This career lasted some few years, when who the deuce should come in the way but the honourable Captain C—t—y; he was a man calculated to create mirth and jollity more than any man I ever knew; his only fault was being too fond of six thousand a year; his pay and pensions might make it a thousand more.

He was a fashionable man, and a friend of the highest man in the State—at all events, he was honoured with an invitation to all his private parties, and had the high honour of his arm, often when in public.

The Captain became on very intimate terms with our heroine, and escorted her everywhere; they were seen at 'Court, at Ball, at Opera, Play;' and the most dashing appearances on the town, were the honourable Captain and Madame.

They went to Brighton and sported away in fine style. They made trips to the Devil's Dyke, and at the Curds and Whey House they spent many jovial days.

Madame Vestris is a genuine lover of liberty, which even the managers of the theatres were, and are, not able to control. When Abbot engaged her for the Dublin Theatre, he announced her for a certain day; the day came, but no Vestris made her appearance; a week passed—another—and another: she remained still *non est inventus;* three weeks of houses crowded in expectation, put Paddy out of all patience, and he murmured loudly against the manager, who in despair put his foot on board the steamer, and made his way up to London. The lady was not at her residence, nor did they know where she was. He imagined she had passed him on the road to Holyhead, and took a seat in the mail to return to Hibernia. He was waiting in the coffee-room at Hatchett's, when, accidently casting his eye upon a newspaper, he read under the head of Brighton:—

"Madame Vestris still continues to promenade the Steyne, and perform her ablutions daily in the ocean; she looks in lovely health, but does not perform at our theatre, though strongly solicited to do so."

"Whew!" went the manager, in a tone as long and as loud as my uncle Toby's lillabullero, and ordering a post-chaise, drove off, forfeiting his coach hire, and forgetting his trunk, which went to Dublin before him—he never missed it until he was in want of a clean shirt and then he thought it had been stolen, so overjoyed was he to have got scent of the fugitive. He found her snugly lodged at Brighton. She had totally forgotten her engagement, and welcomed him as an old friend come to pay her a friendly visit. With ghastly looks he told his tale—'that he was ruined in the good opinion of the citizens of Dublin for ever.' She made every effort to repair the evil her absence of mind had occasioned, and set out with him that evening in a post-chaise and four.

When she came out in Dublin she was going to make an apology, but the Paddies received her with cheers and would not suffer it.

This one instance will serve to display her careless habits, and thoughtless way of treating the most serious engagement; it is a habit she acquired in early youth, and will never throw off till her old age arrives, and probably not then, nor till death strips her of all faults and foibles.

She has always been accounted, with truth, one of the most generous women upon the public stage, though some of the prints of the day have held her out as fleecing her friends, being meanly

avaricious; we know to the contrary, and will proceed to give a few instances that have come to our knowledge from a source which we know to be purely correct.

Upon an occasion when our heroine had been performing at the Cork Theatre, she had her horses put to her carriage, and was on the point of starting; an old gentleman, who had been very attentive to her, came to take leave, and lamented the necessity of her being obliged to quit Cork so suddenly, in order to fulfil an engagement elsewhere, adding, 'had you remained, it was in contemplation to have asked you to perform for the benefit of the Roman Catholic Charity School.' She was sorry that her engagement would not admit of an hour's delay; 'but,' said she, 'I can spare them this out of what the bounty of my Cork friends have bestowed upon me,' at the same time presenting him three five pound notes.

The story of her humanity to the soldier's family is well known.

She was travelling in a glass coach to Dublin, and was about ten miles from it, when she got out to walk up a hill, and view the scenery from its summit; it was a scorching hot summer's day, and on the hill top she found sitting on the grass, a woman with one child at her breast, and two at her knee, mere infants. She questioned her, and elicited from her that her husband was a soldier, who had just come from abroad, and was in Kilmainham barracks; she had travelled one hundred and fifty miles, and carried the three babes all the way, except now and then getting a lift in a farmer's cart, and they often refused her that, when they knew she was a soldier's wife.—The sympathy of our heroine was awakened—she ordered from a little road-side public-house, as much bread and cheese and beer, (the place afforded nothing else) as they could eat, for they were nearly starving, and bundling them inside of the carriage, she herself mounted the coach-box, and in this manner conveyed them to Dublin. She set them down near Kilmainham, and gave the woman a one-pound note; the carriage drove off, leaving the poor woman on her knees calling on the Holy Virgin to bless 'the angel in the shay.'

There is not anything vicious in the composition of Madame Vestris—quite the contrary; she has numerous good points about her—charity, humanity, forgiveness, liberality, good-humour, mercy, and compassion; these, surely, more than counterbalance her little failings, which, such as they are, she bears upon her own head, and she alone will have to answer for. She certainly prefers going through life laughing and loving, singing and dancing, to fasting and praying, verily does she believe with Shakspere,

"Let me play the fool,
With mirth and laughter let old wrinkles come."

And who is there who possesses a grain of reason that will not approve her choice; canting bigots and enthusiastic fools may hold up their hands and cry shame, but they should learn one act of charity, such as that we have narrated above is better than going three times a day to church, and reaching home with your purse string closed against humanity.

But the case above narrated is not the only one which we can bring forward to prove our assertion of her exceeding charity. The following instances of generosity and good feeling, are authenticated facts.

A young man who had been engaged to play subordinate parts at the Olympic during her management, was imprudent enough to enter a cold bath while in a state of perspiration, a severe and protracted illness was the consequence, which ended in his demise. A subscription was commenced by his brother actors for the purpose of enabling his disconsolate widow to bury him with decency; on the petition being shown to Madame, she exclaimed, "poor fellow, has he received his salary during his illness?" on being answered in the negative, she instantly wrote an order on her treasurer for the amount, desired the money already collected to be given to the widow, and the undertaker's bill be sent to her when she discharged it; she afterwards gave the poor young woman a situation in the wardrobe of the theatre, and she has we believe held a similar situation ever since.

The following occurrence is likewise worthy of record. A young female chorister whose sister was a vocalist of great celebrity, but lately deceased, married previous to the season and shortly became in that interesting situation which ladies wish to be who love their lords. She still however continued her professional duties till her situation was too obvious to be concealed. Madame one evening on meeting her behind the scenes, thus accosted her, "Mrs. M—, I fear your health will be affected if you exert yourself by attending here every evening. I beg you will remain at home until your hour of trial be past and the moment your health is sufficiently re-established your situation will be open for you, you will find no difficulty at the Treasury on Saturday, keep yourself quiet, good night, God bless you." The young lady gratefully accepted the indulgence thus offered and her salary continued to be paid in full until she was enabled to resume her duties at the theatre.

As we wish however to be impartial, we are sorry to admit that Madame Vestris, notwithstanding her many good qualities, is in the habit of acting, occasionally, in a very tyrannical manner towards those whom adverse fortune has placed beneath her,

should they be so unfortunate as to incur her displeasure. Of this overbearing conduct, the writer was an eye witness one evening, during the performance of the Beggar's Opera at the theatre royal Covent Garden, in which our heroine sustained her favourite character of Captain Macheath, the late Mr. J. Isaacs was cast for Mat o' the Mint. Madame having performed Macheath for a number of nights at the Haymarket theatre, did not think proper to attend even one rehearsal at Covent Garden. Mr. Isaacs studied the part allotted to him very carefully; and certainly no man could go on the stage more perfectly prepared, he having, to use a theatrical phrase, made himself "dead up in the part." It appears, however, that the prompt-book of the Haymarket had been slightly altered, at her request, in order to bring into her part what is professionally termed "a bit of fat," alias "a clap-trap," of which alteration Mr. Isaacs was perfectly ignorant; for such was the genuine urbanity of that gentleman, that had Madame made the circumstance known to him, he would, without a murmur, have adapted his own part to that of her Macheath.

The performance at night proceeded steadily on, till the scene where Macheath enters to the gang, to give them instructions as to their respective routes, &c. In the midst of the dialogue, Madame suddenly stopped, as if waiting for a cue.

Poor Isaacs being rather nervous, began to fidget; while Madame, advancing towards him, exclaimed with a frown, "Go on, sir."

"Madame," replied he, "I have given you the cue."

"'Tis false, sir!"

"I beg pardon, Madame, I have not omitted a single word."

She answered, and in a tone so loud as to be heard by a great portion of the audience, "I say 'tis false, sir, and I'll not speak another line till I have my cue;" and, carelessly tapping her boots with her cane, she swaggered up the stage, and seating herself on the table, sat for some time swinging her crossed legs to and fro.

The audience now perceiving very clearly that something was wrong, began to express their disapprobation by violent hisses.

Not knowing what else to do in this harrowing situation, poor Isaacs commenced his solo, "Let us take the road," which with the chorus, finishes the scene.

No sooner were they fairly off the stage than Madame, stepping up to Isaacs like a little fury, exclaimed, "How dare you, sir, insult me in this manner before the audience?"

"My dear Madame, nothing was further from my thoughts;

nor can I even now imagine how I have displeased you."

"Well, Sir, I tell you once more that I will never again go on the stage with a man who is so glaringly imperfect in his part."

"I beg your pardon, Madame, I am *perfect* to the *letter:* indeed I have played the part so very frequently, that I could almost venture to repeat it backwards."

"I don't care, Sir, how often you have *attempted* the part: I have *performed* Macheath at the Haymarket and other Theatres, without any unpleasant occurrence taking place; and had you, Sir, been sufficiently perfect, it would have been so now."

"But, Madame, I cannot be expected to be able to play a part by instinct; and had you attended at rehearsal this mor——

"Sir," interrupted she, "I shall attend to what rehearsals I think proper. Am I to be accountable to you, sir, for my actions? I shall appeal to the Manager to protect me from insult."

"I hope, Madame (answered Isaacs), you will allow me to speak. So far from meditating insult, I was about to observe that if you had attended to *but one* rehearsal, I would with pleasure have studied my part with the alterations marked in the Haymarket prompt Book."

"Don't talk to me, Sir. I tell you, you don't know your part. There is no alteration in the Haymarket prompt-book; and I repeat Sir, that I will never again be seen on the same stage with you."

"Upon my word Madame, it is extremely hard to be accused so unjustly. Allow me to appeal to Mr. Parsloe (the prompter) and if I have not spoken every line according to his books, I shall not only be ready to make an apology but to submit to any fine the management may think proper to inflict."—Mr. Parsloe produced the book from which it appeared that Mr. Isaacs was perfectly correct.

Madame was ready to burst with rage and vexation, and on the call-boy's informing her that the stage waited, it was with the greatest difficulty that the manager, the late J. Faucet, could prevail on her to appear again before the audience.

In the midst of her next song, her feeling seemed to overpower her: she burst into tears and rushed from the stage! Madame is an excellent actress. After a lapse of a few minutes, Mr. Faucet came forward with an apology—He stated that Madame Vestris having suddenly become seriously indisposed, claimed the indulgence of the audience. She would endeavour to go through the dialogue, if they would allow the singing to be omitted.

Thus through her own obstinacy, the feelings of a worthy man (for that such was Mr. Isaacs, none who had the honour of his

acquaintance, can deny) were keenly wounded, and the audience deprived of the principal portion of their entertainment; as it is well known that the second act of the Beggars Opera is nearly all vocal, every note of which was on this occasion omitted.

In pursuing a lady's course through a merry life, I always bear in mind those lines of O'Keefe :—

"Be to her faults a little blind,
Be to her virtues very kind."

And was on the point of adding—

"Let all her ways be unconfined,"

when I recollected there was no occasion for it in this case, a more unconfined bird never wantoned on balmy wings than our heroine; and I am sure that man is not yet born that would be able to control her, or restrain her, from doing anything she would set her mind upon. Her husband made it an excuse for leaving her that she was of such a combustible temper, the house was filled with explosions of passion, and she 'worried his life out.' These were his own words; and it was very ungallant to charge such a lovely creature with worrying a man like a bull-dog until his life was extinct. There were other ways by which she was more likely to have killed him.

In Ireland Madame Vestris was so decidedly a favourite that it is to be wondered why she did not oftener go there. She has had annual offers of engagements, on the most liberal terms, and has seldom accepted them. There is something attractive in the meridian of London which rivets female performers to the metropolis, for no doubt it is there only that talent and beauty are properly appreciated and rewarded. It was in Ireland that Madame formed her celebrated connection with Lord V——t, which lasted for such a length of time as to induce the public to believe that she was at length mated to a man of her own taste, and one able to gratify her in all respects.

But this connection was put an end to by the father of Lord V——t stopping the supplies; and as Madame knew that love could not dwell long with poverty, she broke off a connection, without regret, for, though custom could not stale her infinite variety! yet with her paramour it had brought about its usual effect, he had become flat, stale, and unprofitable, and this to one who liked the thing for the thing itself, was a sufficient cause of separation. Indeed love itself has no refinements without wealth, it is a course sensual passion, soon excited, soon gratified, in which the reason, the mind, the life, hath no part. And this was the great charm of our heroine; she was all spirit, fire, and animation;

her resources are infinite; and no one has ever passed a night in her company without owning it.

Her popularity was now at its height; offers of engagements at extraordinary salaries were daily arriving from various managers, provincial and metropolitan. Authors were continually presenting pieces, the principal parts of which were written expressly for her; and when she could be prevailed on to accept a character, the success of the piece was considered certain. She possesses excellent judgment; and it has very rarely occurred that a play of which she had spoken favourably at the reading has been known to fail in representation.

The various amatory adventures in which she was known to have sustained such prominent parts are at once so notorious, that very little excuse need be offered for mentioning the names of Tom Duncombe, the present patriotic member for Finsbury; John Philipson, Esq. (handsome Jack as he was called); Lord Castlereagh, the favourite now of Grisi; and, though last, not least, her present husband Charles Matthews, who deserted the profession of an architect, to which his celebrated father educated him, to become a devotee and professor of the histrionic art in which his success has been such as to cause surprise that any other line of business should ever have been chosen for him.

With regard to her amours with the individuals above named there is but little to be said, our readers must, therefore, excuse our attempting to dilute our pages with dry and uninteresting details. But there are other individuals who have been indulged with a participation in her favours, concerning whose amours some rather curious anecdotes may be related.

There is a singular story related of her when in Paris. Young Lord P—, an ignorant and impudent young puppy, pestered her with his attentions, and at length she consented to receive him at her lodgings.

> "Even at the midnight hour,
> When spectres rise, and spells have power."

For this favour some hundred francs were laid down, and as the bell tolled twelve he entered the mansion of bliss, and was cautiously ushered into his charmer's bedroom; where he was as happy as heart could wish, and blest beyond compare, in his own opinion. When day broke, he found to his horror that he was in bed with a black woman, who had only one eye, and not any nose. Those who had passed the joke upon him, rushed into his bedroom to turn him into ridicule. There is an old saying, "Joan is as good as her mistress in the dark," and if this young amoroso had departed before day, he would have ever after the

satisfaction of reflecting he had been caressing an angel instead of a devil. He departed, vowing vengeance, which he never executed, and some years after became one of the favoured swains of her who had played him this scurvy trick.

During the time when Madame resided in Curzon Street, that is to say during the heyday of her gay life, she, from an affectation of religion, for the design could not be real, hired a pew in Curzon Street Chapel, and who the deuce did she take it from but a lady unfortunately known too well about the town, Lady Perceval, afterwards Countess of Egremont. This lady, therefore, sold her pew, and Madame was the lovely purchaser; sixty pounds was paid for a seat never meant to be occupied, and which never had been occupied except by a servant for years. There was a motive on both sides; Lady Perceval had occasion for the cash, and Madame for the pew. There used to come to this chapel a very devout old man about seventy years old; he was a bachelor (that is to say a single man), and very rich, and, therefore, was an object worth our heroine's attention. She set her sparklers at work, and under the semblance of religion, caught the old devotee's attention; he was really a man of true religion, perhaps to an excess bordering upon superstition.

There was a time in my life when I would have ridiculed such a character, and made him the object of bitter sarcasm; but time, and some extraordinary experience of God's goodness, have given me different opinions. I am not a whit more religous than I was twenty years ago, though that additional twenty has brought me nearer to the grave. I love a pretty girl as dearly as ever, and whilst I depict the frailties of a lovely woman, I do not by any means censure her conduct. Women, when they profess an inclination to levity are necessary to mankind; they keep the lead of love on its way, and are no more to be blamed for their natural propensities being gratified, than the elephant in Exeter Change that went mad for a companion.

This old man took a fancy to our heroine, and accosted her one day as she was going out of the chapel, in a very friendly way, and hoped she had been edified by the discourse she had heard from the lips of the preacher. She acknowledged she had, and with primitive humility courtesied, and thank him for the interest he took in her salvation.

So young and so pious, thought the old man, she is worth looking after, and he invited her to his house, in Alfred Place, Tottenham Court Road. He lived in good style, kept his carriage, and servants in livery, and made it a rule to have three courses served up at his table—though he was a very temperate

man, and seldom tasted of anything but soup, fish, and apple pie.

I apprehend that the town-acquainted reader knows well that I allude to Colonel Mordaunt, the East Indian Nabob; he was said to have brought from that country five hundred thousand pounds. I firmly believe he brought double that sum, but wasted a great portion of it on Bible and Missionary Societies.

His career in India was rather a peaceable one, as he principally was British resident, at one of the native towns; and excepting the battle of Tanjore, was never engaged in a military operation during the twenty-two years of residence in India. It is but justice to his memory to state, that in the despatches sent home it was stated—"The gallantry of Major Mordaunt ensured a victory when every regiment had been driven from their position; he snatched the colours from his ensign, and spurred his horse into the water, calling on his men (two hundred Sepoys and four hundred Europeans) to follow. They gained the left bank, and in a charge, without firing one musket, overthrew three thousand of the enemy. He pursued his success, and after storming the fort returned, and forced back the left wing of the enemy, securing us a complete triumph. I am concerned to say, he has received a musket ball in his shoulder, and three severe sabre wounds. I recommend him strongly to attention.

CORNWALLIS."

Upon his return to England, possessed of an immense fortune, he was granted a retiring pension by the East India Company. He assumed the character of a religious man, and it is fair to presume he was sincere. I do believe he was—and at the time he made his acquaintance with our heroine he was in the possession of all his faculties, only attached to Mother Church more than reason would call right. She visited him openly at his house, and in fact he was never a day without seeing her.

The time came that the Colonel should make his exit from the stage of existence; he felt his end approaching, and had himself removed to the Well-Walk, at Hampstead. Thither our heroine accompanied him, and nursed him with a mother's care for six months. He then died, and she was left solitary.

The will was read, and to her utter disappointment, her keenest chagrin, she was not provided for as she had hoped and expected. She was left the interest of eight thousand pounds for life, and then it was to go to his grandchildren after her death.

Many years ago, Madame was caricatured driving in a curricle with two boys, one on each side of her. It was understood at the time that these two young noblemen met her on an excursion to Richmond. She was accompanied by Tom Steele and his

lady; they had dined, and evening was closing fast. She wanted to return, but so rivetted were her male protectors to their bottle, that they swore they would not budge an inch till they had finished another bottle a-piece.

In this extremity, she herself came into the yard, and urged the ostler to make haste, and put the horses to the carriage. She was recognized in the court by Lord V——t, and his brother.

"Oh, my God, is it you! What is the matter? Why are you so agitated?"

"So happy am I to see you," said she, "for now I have some one to protect me." "And happy am I to afford it you," replied his lordship, "what are you about?—what can we do?" "Why see me safe to London; my male protectors are not able to protect themselves, for they are tipsy, and my female friend appears resolved to make a night of it with them." "Well then," replied Lord V., "come along; our boat is down below; let them make a night of it, and be d—d; if they are half seas over, we'll soon be on the river, and they cannot catch us; come along, there's my arm."

Madame gladly took hold, and they were soon on board; and, with the exception of calling at three or four places, for a little refreshment, they did not stop anywhere, till they reached Whitehall Stairs.

Lord V. being a little over officious in rendering that assistance which he wanted himself, pulled Madame into the water. There was no danger, but she got wet above her hips, and was from necessity obliged to go to his lordship's for warmth. She was soon swathed in the housekeeper's clothes; cordials were at once administered, and all the perils of the deep forgotten over a jovial supper.

On the following evening Lord V., his brother, and Madame Vestris, appeared, *en famille*, in a box at Covent Garden Theatre.

Scandal then let loose her venomed tongue, and the caricaturists began to exercise their spiteful ingenuity. Madame Vestris was pictured as driving two boys in a curricle. The allusion was well understood, but in fact these two boys were, the first, 22; the second, 18 years old. So much for the truth of caricatures.

His lordship had a cousin, married to a Captain in the Navy, who at this time had a ship at Deptford. Our heroine, ever heedless of what the world said, when she knew her intentions were innocent, accompanied them on a visit to this captain's ship, where they spent the day in mirth and harmony with each other.

There is always some broad humour passing on board a man

of war, and on this occasion a ludicrous incident occurred. Miss C., of Drury Lane, was one of the party, and seated near the hatchway, when the female part of the company were thrown into dreadful consternation by the entrance of a ———mouse. The little intruder flew for protection under the petticoats of Miss C., who in great agony bawled out for help. A lieutenant flew to her assistance, and caught the rakish mouse, Miss C. all the while crying, "he's in my pocket! he's in my pocket!"

This sally was well received, and the mouse created so much merriment, the party did not break up till next morning. There are always plenty of hammocks, cots, cabins, and good-natured fellows to accommodate ladies on ship board, and they may sleep as soundly and securely there as if they were in a nunnery if they please.

This ship excursion led to an offer from a celebrated admiral, supposed to be a little cracked, to carry her to Malta, where he promised to make her chief of the opera, and pledged himself she should receive a large salary. Tempting as was the proposition she declined it, and preferred remaining in London, where her person too well known was then making a little noise about town.

He had accomplishments sufficient to induce any young lady to hover round the halo of his bright blue eyes.

In Dublin our heroine had two admirers: Lieutenant D. of the Dragoon Guards, and Captain H., who was on half-pay, and had a cottage at Black Rock, which is a very pretty spot on the sea coast, four miles from the city, and where, on Sundays and holidays, the citizens throng in crowds for pleasure. The place is truly lovely.

Madame Vestris had been with a party to spend the day there: fishing and boat-sailing in the morning, and dining with Captain H. in his cottage.

Some days after, Mr. D. met Captain H., and told him, "he should not have acted so to him, had he entertained the Vestris, but would have asked him to join the party." The Captain protested he knew not of their coming; it was a friendly visit, and they took him by surprise. This, (which was true), Mr. D. disbelieved, and high words ensued, the latter calling the former "gaol-bird," (he had been confined in prison for debt.)

A challenge to meet next morning passed, and as in Ireland they make no secret of those things, but crowds assemble to witness a duel as if it were a show for amusement; when Madame Vestris drove up to Mr. D's door to speak to him on business, the servant's reply was,—

"Arrah, madman, and aint he gone to his lawyers, to make his

will, seeing he's going to fight for a duel to-morrow morning." This greatly alarmed her, and she got from Pat all the particulars.

She, by perseverance, brought the parties together, and effected a reconciliation, keeping seconds and all with her to dinner. Such a woman was not likely to urge her best friend to venture his life on any occasion.

I omitted in its proper place to mention one circumstance, if any place can be improper for an attempt to follow the footsteps of such a wayward being, week by week, or month by month, would be futile; so we must catch her wherever we can, without enquiring what brought her to the place, or from whence she came. When she quitted her apartments in Brydges Street, she removed to a boot-makers in Newport Market.

Madame, during the time that she lived singly, was rather low in her ideas of residence, from a policy with which I am unacquainted, or perfectly indifferent where she pillowed. Her lodging in Brydges Street was only two doors from White Hart Yard; the greatest sink of juvenile depravity in London, and

"With many a foul and midnight murder stain'd;"

but then she had some excuse, its being near the theatre, and convenient for her dressing at home, and going ready armed in cap-a-pie, in the same manner that Mrs. W. West sallies out from the bookseller's under cover of a grey cloak, and has only a hop, step, and jump, into the stage door.

Why, Madame Vestris, in the receipt of such a handsome salary, and surrounded by so many liberal friends, should choose (as Mary Anne Clarke said) to lodge with the Emperor of Morocco, alias, a cobbler in Newport Market, it is difficult to conjecture.

I should much like to see this mender of soles; if he be a very handsome fellow, like him who mended the hole in the Countess of Berwick's shoe. I might give a shrewd guess, for his shop having the preference to more elegant and commodius lodgings. Lord! I should as soon think of looking for the Rev. Rowland Hill, on a Sacrament Sunday, in mother Wood's Bagnio, as for the Vestris in Newport Market. I should be apt to say in earnest, what Hamlet does in jest, "You are a fishmonger;" I should not then be far wrong, for she was certainly an odd fish, as ever revelled out of water; something like an eel, you may attack it on the head as much as you please, and make no impression, but to bring at once under your control, you must seize it by the tail, and your object is accomplished.

Butchers are more famous for possessing the stupidity of an ox,

than the frolicsome gaiety of the innocent lamb, and in such a low market as Newport, we would expect the most vulgar and stupid rascals. "The toad wears yet a precious jewel in its head," and diamonds are dug out of dirty clay. I have heard of an impudent compliment paid to our heroine by a Newport butcher: to her whose ruling passion is vanity, flattery from any one must be acceptable, provided it is not too far from the truth.

She was in the market, and searching for a leg of mutton; to which she is as partial, as His Royal Highness the Duke of York is to liver and bacon. She could not find one to suit her, and a gallant knight of the steel patiently unhooked her about a dozen; —none suited her fancy, and she peevishly exclaimed, "you have a miserable show of meat to-day, I'll be hanged if you have a good leg in your shop."

The butcher bowed, smiled, and said, "and I'll suffer to be hanged ma'am, if I have not now in my shop, two of the finest legs in England;" he pointed to her ladyship's pretty pedestals. Such a compliment, and from such a quarter, surprised, and confused her, though very seldom, as Jack tar has it, "taken aback with any breeze, fair or foul."

Any leg the witty butcher pleased was ordered home, and paid for at any price he chose to set upon it. The lower orders frequently slip out much better things than those studied by their superiors, the professed wits of the day; for instance, Madame Vestris sent a young man (one of the play-house porters), to call her servant to come to her in the green-room; the lad remained too long, and had been tippling in place of looking for "Mungo."

He returned to say, "that he could not find him anywhere. "Why, sirrah," said the enraged Don Giovanni, "you have never looked for him I am sure, he is only in the streeet." "Oh!" replied the lad, "Madame; being in the street, 'tis no wonder I missed him, for as he is a black man, I had no chance of seeing him in the dark."

I am not aware how long her ladyship sojourned at the shoemaker's in Newport market; but even there she unconsciously made her conquests, for her appearance and manner, acted upon all ranks and conditions of men, who bowed the knee to the sorceress. The words of Sheridan seem to have been written for her:—

"To you no soul shall bear deceit,
No stranger offer wrong;
For friends in all the ag'd you'll meet,
And lovers in the young."

Everybody has heard of Grafton House, where Mr. Flint sells

his haberdashery goods ten times cheaper than any man in the "whole world," and, therefore, cannot afford to wrap any purchase up in a piece of paper. He employs in the shop near Newport Market, some twenty journeymen, all dapper—

"Fellows of figure, and worthy of a lady's eye,"

who he finds, from experience, are a wonderful attraction to draw on female customers. Madame was a customer for the little odds and ends she had occasion for to trim her theatrical robes with, and as she is very chatty and familiar, often talked to the deputy foreman, a handsome young man, named Smith. The writer knew him, and has talked to him at Slaughter's, in St. Martin's Lane, many an evening before he was acquainted with his profession; he was polite and well-bred,—shrewd and intelligent, and once held an ensign's commission in the army; but lagging behind at an engagement, he came under the censure of his superiors, and to avoid the consequences of a court-martial, (which under the discipline of Lord Wellington, often led to opening the organ of courage by a bullet in the brain), he wisely scampered from the Pyrenees to Lisbon, and escaped to England, where he engaged in a pursuit more congenial to his soul,—measuring ribbons and calico, and dealing out needles and pins behind Mr. Flint's counter. The lad was right; many a one, like him, have been seized with a fit of timidity without the sense to make so able a retreat,—that part of warfare he had at all events learnt, and it was the only thing he benefitted by during a rough campaign.

Poor Smith incontinently fell in love with his fair customer, who from going to the shop in her dishabille, he set down as some lady's maid. The first proof he gave of his passion was by wrapping her silk and spangles up in white paper,—the next by enquiring "if she was married?"—a very rational way of commencing business. The lady, who loves a joke as well as George Colman, encouraged the deception. "She was not married,"—"her mistress advised her to have nothing to do with the men," and "she had never seen one to her liking."

Those who have seen her perform *The Country Girl, &c.*, may imagine what effect her delivery of such sentences would have upon the doting and simple shopman. He was ravished with delight; and Madame used to carry her female friends to the shop to hear the amorous things her "silk and twist Adonis" (so she named him) said to her. She forbade him to watch her home, under the penalty of never speaking to him again. This lasted till Smith became very importunate, and openly offered to

marry her; he had a sum of three hundred pounds, and they would have a shop of their own. Madame thought it cruel to carry the joke on further, and resolved to open his eyes.

One day she presented him with a box order for Drury Lane, which she said was given to her by her mistress, and promised that "though she should not accompany him, he should see her there." He drest in his proudest, and flew to the house, taking his seat near the stage as she had directed him, where he waited with fond impatience for the arrival of the condescending fair. Every time the box-door moved he started, and turned his head as if a bailiff had tapped him on the shoulder; and was so fidgetty that those near him imagined he was either insane or drunk.

The play passed over and no appearance of his Dulcinea. The *Othello* of Kean, and the *Desdemona* of Mrs. W. West, gave poor Smith the horrors; and when the curtain dropped he went out and primed himself with two or three *goes* of brandy and water.

He had fixed himself in his original place, which felt to him like Damiens' bed of burning steel,—and at length the curtain rose; he heeded it not, for his attention was rivetted to the box-door, in expectation of his charmer. A loud and long clapping made him turn to see the cause—he stared—"rubbed his eyes, and rubbed again,"—and at last groaning, he cried, "by heavens it is her!" and rushed into the lobby; he there enquired and was told who she was, and the box-keeper informed him she lived in Newport Market. All his visions of love faded away, and he saw he had been merely made a plaything of. To avoid Madame (for he had no hope) he removed to a shop near Clarges Street, Piccadilly, where the writer often saw him in passing, looking as one not likely to be in love again.

The writer can very well remember when this story about Smith was first whispered in private, and then reached the public ear. Madame was not one likely to keep a secret, and so much inclined to provoke mirth in others, she made no secret of the joke she had played, but said she was very ready to do anything in her power to serve him; and as he had a *penchant* for *lady's maids*, could recommend him to Lady Lanesborough, who had always three or four of those *secret-keepers*, to dispose of on *moderate terms*.

There was some little cruelty in this flirtation, but Madame had heard the story of Smith's flight from the Pyrenees, and, therefore, had a contemptible opinion of him; for no woman, from the most exalted in life, down to the lowest that crawl the streets in quest of prey, but what despises a coward.

Madame Vestris played some curious pranks while she remained

at Newport Market. I should be glad to know if Madame recollects the tavern kept by Mr. W. near Leicester Street, and that kept by his brother near Queen Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields; she must—she cannot have forgotten these scenes of her achievements. Suppose I enliven the tedium of this closing scene with one or two anecdotes of her cobbling history; she need not be at all ashamed of them, but I know she is not prone to blushing, and here goes.

Mr. W., a man of some consequence, though a *gin spinner*, is of portly size, and has good humour depicted in his every feature; he is a *bon vivant*, keeps a gig and a country house, and has, perhaps, every morn he rises, ten thousand pounds in his power. He is a man who mingles much with nobility, and his opinion is always taken by the dons on the merits of pugilists and horses, for he is accounted an excellent judge. It was he who made a wager with the Prince of Wales, that in one *half* hour *fifty* women would come to his bar for something to drink, and *forty* of them should be made to acknowledge themselves strumpets. He won the wager, and with ease. This original had a room up stairs elegantly furnished,—nay, sumptuously, and there entertained his friends with all the luxuries of the season: for he was (and is) one of the most liberal men in the world.

He used on every Friday to have a "select hop," or private dance, to which he invited all his young friends,—I say young, for Mr. W. was in his fortieth year. This was the Jubilee day of the week, and a pleasanter *skip* in an obscure way was never known.

W. had the honour to select and buy horses for Sir Benjamin Bloomfield, and was his confidential friend—in the stable. He also frequented the theatres, and made one in the Green-room from his intimacy with the great John Kemble, who assiduously courted the friendship of Mr. W.; and on the few weeks preceding his benefit, regularly called and took a bottle of Vin de Grave with him in his bar cabin. W. was aware of his selfish motives, and used to say, "he is so clever, so agreeable, and of so great talents, I totally forget his avarice."

The neighbouring shopkeepers' daughters and sons were attendants upon this troop, and John Kemble sate by as a spectator, while Madame and her friends

"Tript it on the light fantastic toe."

Here it was she became acquainted with young Britton, an officer in the service of the Honourable East India Company, who had returned home to recruit his health, and made it ten

times worse than when he left the shores of Hindostan. He had a small income, independent of his commission, and was a gay fellow,—aye, and a handsome fellow too; which was no small recommendation in the eyes of a lady.

Mr. W. one night had a superlative party, and Madame, Lieut. B., and all his chief friends were present. The dance was merrily kept up till midnight, and then the whole descended to sup in the lower dining-room. Madame Vestris and Lieut. Britton were proved to be "non est inventus." Their absence excited some alarm, and excited, amongst the ladies, great curiosity. Where they went, or whether they went in company, could not be ascertained then, but

"Murder will out."

W. was partial to a trip to Ramsgate, and in the course of a few days drove down thither with his dogs and fishing tackle. On the Dover road he met with his fair friend and Lieut. B., arm in arm, and looking unutterable things at each other. They were emerging from a small coppice, and appeared in as much confusion as hunted hares.

Reader I am the last man in the world to imagine evil, and the first to catch at the idea of pleasure. What they were doing in the coppice you or I reader have no right to suppose, suffice it to say that they both seemed as though they had been doing nothing of which they repented. Mr. W. accosted them, and they all returned to Ramsgate, where they spent a happy day together. This may be called one of Madame's bold freaks; but at the same time it must be confessed that report did aver that Mr. B. was a near relation, and this may be true,—relationships ever so near admit of a closer connexion, and truly I am very much afraid that on this occasion consanguinity was out of the question.

But to proceed with our history. In May, 1830, Madame Vestris became sole lessee of the Olympic Theatre. For some years previous to the Olympic having been taken by Madame Vestris it was considered by the profession as a most unprofitable concern; it has at various periods been opened by theatrical speculators; among whom we remember the late Mr. Elliston; Mr. Frampton, then landlord of the King of Prussia, next door to the theatre; the late Mr. Oxberry, father to the facetious little comedian of the present day: and Mr. Wild; all of whom, with the exception of the first named gentleman, retired, after a brief season of two or three months, with considerable loss. Mr. Elliston was chiefly indebted for his success to the production of

Rochester, a very peculiar and cleverly constructed pantomime, entitled, "Broad Grins or Harlequin Mag and Harlequin Fag," and the never-tiring, "Giovanni in London," which was originally produced at this theatre under the successful management of Mr. Elliston, and was the vehicle for introducing Mr. Keeley to a London audience in the character ef *Lepporella.* On Mr. Elliston relinquishing the management, the theatre sunk into obscurity; and, when it was occasionally opened for a short period, the gallery was the only part of the house at which money was taken, the pit and boxes being nightly more than two-thirds filled with orders, and by parties of by no means aristocratic appearance. In fact, it was a matter of no little surprise to the neighbourhood when they beheld even a hackney coach at the box entrance. Where can be found a greater proof of the popularity of Madame Vestris, than by comparing the state of the Olympic during her sway with the period alluded to? For several seasons the house was crammed to suffocation within a few minutes of the doors being opened; the carriages of the most distinguished families nightly stopped the way, extending from the theatre more than midway up Drury Lane; and her boxes exhibited a display of beauty and fashion not to be excelled by any theatre in Europe. Nay, so great was the demand for places that at the commencement, we believe, of the third season of her triumphant career, she was induced to take away the gallery altogether, and substitute a spacious and elegant tier of boxes in its place. The result justified her most sanguine expectations—the experiment proved entirely successful. In fact, the elegant chasteness of the entire decorations of the theatre obtained it the reputation of being the most unique and splendid establishment in London.

During the time when Madame ruled over the destinies of the Olympic Theatre, the most celebrated performers were amongst her company. Of these we may briefly speak of Liston, Farren Keely, Mrs. Orger, Mr. S. Vining, Miss Murray, Mrs. Nesbitt, &c. It was through her unrivalled judgment that Charles Matthews had the opportunity of making his appearance on the London Boards. She believed that he had the stuff within him which might be turned to advantage, and the result has not deceived her expectations.

In the year 1838 a report became prevalent that Madame Vestris had again changed her name. Various were the opinions in the public mind as to the degree of credence to be given to the rumour, which was at length settled by announcement that the marriage between herself and Mr. C. Matthews had actually taken place. Shortly after which she, with her newly acquired

husband, embarked in the Great Western steamer for the United States, where they had accepted an engagement for twelve months at an enormous salary. Here, however, although at first well received, circumstances occurred which gave the Yankees cause for changing their opinions, and the result was, that after a short sojourn they were compelled to return to England and again took up their quarters at the Olympic. From this house at the commencement of the season 1840, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Matthews became the lessees of Covent Garden, where the exquisite taste of Madame was still shown in the manner in which she continued to put those productions which she accepted, or those revivors which she decided on upon the stage. Who that has witnessed *The Midsummer Night's Dream*; *The Merry Wives of Windsor*; *The Spanish Curate*; *The London Assurance*, &c., can deny the truth of our assertion.

We come in the last place to speak of the personal appearance, the character and talents of Madame Vestris. Madame is in person about the middle height, neither sinking into insignificance on the one hand, nor dilating into the extensive on the other; her hair is of a dark brown, long and luxuriant; her features classical; her figure full, round, and voluptuous; her facial beauties consist more in quickness of eye and an arch vivacity than anything besides; her face as a whole is striking but it will not bear to be criticised, feature by feature; it would never do for a Venus de Medicis though her figure doubtless would, for her bust and limbs are cast in nature's happiest mould, and her limbs are so symmetrically formed that we may say of her as it was once said of Absalom, from the crown of the head to the sole of her foot she is without blemish, perhaps no woman ever boasted so pure and fair a skin.

"As white as snow and pure as monumental alabaster."

She is in fact formed to be the envy of her own sex and the admiration of the other. Nor does the arch destroyer time appear to make much difference with her. Her way of life is now fast verging towards the sere and yellow leaf, yet does she appear almost the same as when we first saw her, a little stouter perhaps but lively and active as ever, with none of those little tell-tale crow's feet to show the progress of the arch enemy to beauty. Verily may we say of her as Shakspeare sings of *Cleopatra*.

"Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
Her infinite variety. Other women cloy
The appetites they raise, but she makes hungry
Where most she satisfies."

Madame Vestris is off the stage the same that she is on—the

same vivacious fascinating being—the same arch expression—the same easy manners; she is in fact

"The child of social mirth, and love."

But this happy temperament was not always her portion, when she occupied apartments in the early part of her career near White Hart Yard, she has been heard many and many a time to call, "come along Josephine and try to amuse me for I have been in the horrors all day," at the same time her looks bespoke the sentiments of her heart; *certes* at that period she often laboured under a deep depression of spirits. There is not a greater difference between the wildness of an American savage and a man in a state of civilization, than there is to be found in the character of women and of those too, whose habits of life being the same, were likely, from coming always in contact, to acquire a generality of manner; and both in society and domestic privacy, practise the same errors, virtues, and vice.

The fact that it is not so, proves the truth of that maxim of Jean Jacques Rousseau—that Providence never formed two beings alike in any two peculiarities of mind and temper.—Even the happiest married couple, who have lived together for years, without a cloud to overshadow their sunshine of joy, will be found, on examination, to be directly opposite in every tone of the mind; but habit, the force of habit, had brought them to live together in sociality, as a Lion in old Exeter Change had imbibed an affection for the little spaniel bitch, it was at first supposed he would have destroyed.

Of all people living in community together, one would be apt to suppose public performers most likely to imbibe the same sentiments, morals and manners,—but the reverse is the fact. To use an expressive old saying, they are all as different as "chalk from cheese."

Mr. Macready, the tragedian, is proud, haughty, and imperious; supercilious, arrogant, and overbearing in his manners: chilling, and distant to all of his profession; with a high opinion of the importance of his talents.

Mr. Young, of equal, if not superior rank in his profession, is social, affable, and condescending; kind to his inferiors—never boasting of his talents, and without the smallest taint of professional arrogance or low born pride.

Liston, that facetious fellow, whose countenance set the most misanthropic into good humour, before his speaking, and in acting convulsed them with laughter—when off the stage was a serious, steady, contemplative man, much addicted to 'melancholy

musing;' and few can believe it to be so. Those acquainted with the wanderings of the human mind will readily credit it. Lord Byron alludes to this variety, as it respects the female sex, when he writes,

"'Ah; little thought he what thy heart, Gulnare—
When soft could feel, and when incens'd could dare."

There is a story of French texture, of a comedian who, like Liston, kept the audience in a roar. A gentleman became intimate with another at a Coffee-house, who appeared always in the most deplorable and miserable state of mind. The latter one day asked his friend what he should do to be cured of this hypochondriacal affection. 'Go,' said he, 'to the theatre, and see the performances of such a one.' (I forget the name.) 'Alas, sir,' said he, 'I am myself that unhappy man."

'Tis a certain fact that *Liston* is similarly situated, and by no means a jovial companion at the social board.

Terry, who was a serious and contemplative man, a kind of *Penruddock* on the boards, and so partial to the performance of serious parts, was in private life one of the merriest, laughing, and joking fellows that ever enlivened a social party.

Harley, so lively on the mimic scenes is, in private life, a serious, plodding, stock-jobbing man, always keeping the main chance in view. Well may we exclaim with that excellent judge of human nature, Mr. Pope, who says in his Essay on Man, that he—

"'Midst all the countless numbers of his kind,
Can scarcely meet with one congenial mind."

Lively and animated as *Miss Chester* was in her performances, she was of a steady deportment in her private life, and never displayed any of that arch vivacity which characterised her *Beatrice*, and other parts completely her own.

Mrs. Nesbitt on the other hand is perhaps one of the best examples of the contrary with whom we are acquainted. She is the same off the boards as she is on; and those who have witnessed her *Constance* in the *Love Chase*, may thence infer her general character for it would almost appear that she had sat for the character, arch and vivacious, a regular romp acting on the impulse of the moment and speaking the words that first present themselves, she is the very life and soul of every society which is fortunate enough to obtain her presence. An anecdote we beg to relate of her, from our own personal knowledge which may give our readers some insight into her character.

Mrs. Nesbitt one evening when we were fortunate enough to be present made her appearance in the Green Room of the theatre

at which she was engaged, habited for the part she was about to perform, the jewels which she wore attracted the attention of one of the other ladies. Mrs. Nesbitt remarking this, exclaimed "ah! you may look my dear, they're real I know, for I spouted them once for two hundred!" She herself joined heartily in the roar of laughter which followed this naive exclamation.

Of Madame as an actress we must next speak. Her first appearance really on the London boards, was in the latter part of the season of 1816. She chose the part of *Lilla* in the *Siege of Belgrade* and was received with universal acclamation from all parts of a bumper house.

There is not anything in the part worthy of a first-rate performer, and the piece is altogether an incongruous mass of insipidity. She, however, succeeded in throwing into it more interest than any one had done previously; but the applause she received was from a pre-disposition in John Bull to be kind to her, on account of her fame which had heralded her from Paris.

To have had an engagement at Paris, is quite sufficient recommendation to an English manager, even though the person figured in a low capacity; and John Bull is too proud to be thought behind his neighbours in taste and judgment.

The Morning Post of that day, very sapiently remarked, that Lord Byron and his friends were in the house, and at the end of the performance his lordship went behind the scenes to compliment the lady on her extraordinary success, and wish her joy. It might be so, for as the Dutchman says, "No ding is nimpossible mid Got," but unfortunately for the veracity of public prints, and the honour of our heroine, Lord Byron was then busied in shooting doves over the hills of Ravenna.

But the character in which she made the greatest noise, and to which her real success was to be attributed were her *Captain Mackheath* in the *Beggar's Opera*, and her *Don Giovanni*.—Lovely as she always appeared in a woman's dress—all bewitching in her laced tucker, and braided locks, she never reached the acme of her reputation till she threw off female delicacy and undertook at once to teach us how women looked arrayed in breeches. Macheath was the first breeches part in which the Vestris made her appearance in Drury Lane. The beautiful proportion of her limbs, the manly nonchalance of her manner, and the arch way in which she played and gave the songs made the audience forget she was a woman. This character raised her reputation above the reach of all her enemies; the town rang with her praises and every print shop was decorated with her

likeness, the following song made its appearance at the time and we make no apology for giving it entire.

What a breast—what an eye! what a foot, leg, and thigh,
What wonderful things she has shown us,
Round hips, swelling sides, and masculine strides—
Proclaim her an English Adonis!

In *Macheath* how she leers, and unprincipled appears,
And tips off the bumpers so jolly,
And then, oh, so blest, on two bosoms to rest,
And change from a *Lucy* to *Polly*.

Her very hair and style would corrupt with a smile—
Let a virgin resist if she can;
Her ambrosial kisses seem heavenly blisses—
What a pity she is not a man.

Then in *Don Giovanni*, she puts life into many,
And delights with her glees and her catches;
Her best friend at will, she can gracefully kill,
And the wife of his bosom debauches.

The profligate youth she depicts with much truth,
All admire the villain and liar.
In bed-chamber scenes, where you see through the screens,
No rake on the town can come nigh her.

Her example so gay leads all the young astray,
And the old lick their lips as they grin;
And think, if *she would*, why, mayhap, they *still could*
Have the pleasure and the power still to sin.

How alarming is beauty when ankle and shoe-tie
Peep out like a bird from the nest,
They are like heralds of delight, and morn, noon, and night,
Fond fancy can point out the rest.

Then, be breeches on the go,
Which appears with such grace upon many;
But VESTRIS to please, must her lovely limbs squeeze,
In the pantaloons of *Don Giovanni*.

For our own parts we must candidly confess that we are not partial to witnessing a delicate woman assume a masculine part, and thus strut and fret her hour upon the stage. To my mind the shape of a fine woman is seen to more advantage—more delightful to the eye and heart through the wavings of white satin or silk, than the light costume of flesh-coloured pantaloons or slashed doublets of chamois leather. There is something more to be guessed at and which is the more endearing from being concealed.

A man may well thus exclaim when a woman is all but in a

state of nudity, the lightness and colour of the dress often being made to appear like nature, unblushingly exposing herself to fulsome admiration, but whether the taste be a bad or good one; Madame no sooner appeared in breeches—no sooner had she committed this breach of female modesty, than every buck and blood in London crowded to the theatre to see her—not greater crowds attended the death of the elephant, the buffoonery of Matthews, the exhibition of the fortunately ugly mug of Liston.

When Madame performed Macheath in Dublin to crowded and applauding audiences, Lord Mathew observed to Dr. Durgin that her appearance was not masculine enough to impress one with the idea of a bold and daring highway robber. "It is very true," replied the doctor, "but as small as she is, I make no doubt if she told your lordship to stand and deliver, you would very readily obey and look d—d foolish after your purse was empty."

Several of my readers who remember the hey-day of Madame's fame have, no doubt, heard of a celebrated "nabob," (so every one is called that comes laden with wealth from India) nicknamed "Kang-Kook," why, as we do not pretend to comprehend the wit of Bombay—we are at a loss to guess. He brought home the character of a brave and fortunate soldier, and some thousand lacks of rupees, to circulate in the land of his fathers.

As the first step to notoriety, and a certain mode of being introduced to the first company, he procured a seat in Parliament, and voted for the minister. An introduction at Court and all the fashionable etceteras, immediately followed as matter of course, and he soon became eminent in *bon ton*.

Kang-Kook was no gambler, but he knew to whom to lose a few hundreds, when he had a favour to ask; and he sent not a few of his natural sons to India, in rising situations, for which they were all qualified by talents and age.

He also made himself conspicuous in the annals of gallantry—not by a "crim. con." that was too expensive for Kang-Kook, who knows the value of a rupee as well as any Indian Rajah—but by taking into keeping the eldest Miss English, the dress-maker, in Tottenham-court Road, and afterwards of Sackville Street, Piccadilly.

But we must proceed with her other characters. It is impossible to witness her rambles in Don Giovanni, and withhold the meed of just praise. It is an excellent libertine performance, which, whilst you admire, is accompanied with feelings of regret that such superlative talents were so grossly misapplied.

In petticoats our heroine shines most where the part is one of a boisterous nature; her *Juliana*, in the Honey Moon, is a fine

display of ability. In the dance where the Farmer says, "I always kiss where I like," and she retorts with "and so do I," her significant look always calls down thunders of applause: and the air with which she utters "Duke or no Duke, I will be a Duchess!" is a superlative specimen of the proud, petulant, and disappointed minx. Yet even here, where she excels all her rivals, she is not contented with her meed of applause, but aspires to perform the *Duke*, in preference to *Juliana;* she has done so in the country, and in private where plays are got up for amusement, and noblemen are the actors.

At a certain theatre in St. James's Square, she has shown off as the *Duke*, and also as *Petruchio* in the Taming of the Shrew; acting the heroes one night, and the heroines another. The applause she received in the latter exceeded the former, and caused her to secede, and say, "that a blind man was as good a judge of acting as Lord H. and his squinting relations."

We are among those who admire her most in her natural dress; if she be really partial to broad characters, her *Miss Hoyden* is a perfect delineation of vulgar simplicity, and she has given most excellent effect to *Nell*, in the *Devil to Pay*. These, and such parts, though rude and boisterous, are not inconsistent with her sex and female propriety; and one of the prettiest pieces of acting ever seen, is her *Cowslip*, in the *Agreeable Surprise*.

Her voice is a sweet tenor, and has no superior since Miss Tree left the stage; she uses no flourishes, no falsetto tones, and possesses one qualification, rarely found in modern signers who have formed their taste upon the Italian school. Her voice is not all musical tones; you can distinguish the words, and comprehend the meaning of what she is singing.

If we take Madame Vestris all in all, she is a most valuable actress, and possesses more universal talent than any comic lady we know. Chester once excelled her in eloquence, but never could reach her vivacity; Nesbitt beats her in playfulness, but fails to equal her archness and assumed simplicity.

Wanting personal charms, our heroine would never have advanced higher than the reach of a third-rate actress; with them she has risen to be the first low comic actress on the London boards, our respect strives to do her impartial justice, always leaning to the most favourable side. Every person differs in opinion as to the merits of dramatic representations, and these remarks (by an individual who pretends not to be immaculate in his judgment, and would not presume to dictate to his readers), must be taken as the impression of one who sees

not with a lover's eye, but through the perspective of sober opinion, and expects no one to give him credit that has an opportunity of going to the theatre and witnessing in *propria persona* the performances of this fascinating woman. In her very worst parts he will find much to give him satisfaction, and in her very best something surpassing his most sanguine expectations.

And in no one instance will he ever feel disgusted, or inclined to breathe a hiss at anything she does, serious, humorous, or ridiculous. No one can see her without being instantly prepossessed in her favour; her appearance steals away the understanding before she opens her seductive lips, and enchants you with heavenly sounds.

Her vocal powers require not any notice; all admit them to be delightful; and as long as *cherries ripen* with the summer, will her reputation as an English songstress last in musical fame

As a manager, everyone who has had an opportunity of so doing, speaks of her in the highest possible terms. Any of our readers who may doubt this have nothing to do but to turn to the published copy of Leigh Hunt's Legend of Florence, where he will find a tribute from that excellent-hearted man to the goodness and simplicity of Madame Vestris. Of her charitable feeling to those who are under her we have already afforded, we think, sufficient examples.

Her unkind conduct to her mother has been a prolific topic, and there is but little doubt but it was set going by the old lady herself, who would not be satisfied if she received all her daughter's salary. The woman who could sell her daughter for a paltry five hundred pounds, is capable of anything, however base, mean, and vile, and should be avoided as a "thief in the night," or "the pestilence that cometh at noon-day,"—"oh, my soul, come not thou into her secrets." Madame, notwithstanding this woman never acted a mother's part towards her, was for a long while her stay and support, which is highly to her credit; she conscientiously did her duty to one who merits not the homage of a child.

With regard to her conduct to her first husband, we think that every thing which has been said proves that it was on his side that the first error was committed.

As for poor Armand Vestris, all his gallantries are over; he has followed Hans Holbein in the Dance of Death, and will never shake a leg on earth again. His faults die with him, if he had more than the common lot of mortals, and may the memory

of his victims live to animate those he has left behind on the mimic scene.

> "Life's but a walking shadow,
> A poor player, that struts and frets
> His hour upon the stage,
> And then is heard no more."

Vestris died somewhere on the continent, for he had studiously kept out of the way of his wife for many years; a circumstance which, no doubt, "wrung her tender heart," and made her wet her couch—with nightly tears.

No one would have known that he had tript into the tomb if his wife had not announced it by appearing in widow's weeds, smiling and parading under the facade of the King's Theatre, with her *weepers* on, as much as to say, "*To be let and entered upon immediately, these very desirable premises, &c.*"

She might truly say, with a face arrayed in smiles—

> "I have that 'within' which passeth show;
> These but the trappings and the weeds of woe."

We have purposely abstained from entering into much detail relative to the later period of her career, for two very obvious reasons. First, because it has not been distinguished by any very remarkable circumstance; and secondly, because it must be in the recollection of almost all our readers. We shall therefore perform this portion of our self-imposed task in a much more concise manner than we have hitherto done.

Some few years ago Madame Vestris became the lessee of the Olympic Theatre, an establishment which up to this period has proved the ruin of every one who had engaged in the speculation. But undaunted by these reverses which to less spirited individuals would necessarily have appeared dread omens, she felt convinced that good management might yet retrieve its fallen fortunes, and she set about the task in right earnest, surrounded by a company of the first-rate actors in comedy, amongst whom we must not omit to mention Liston, who was in his own proper person a tower of strength, with the aid of authors of the greatest celebrity; not, however, neglecting those whose talents were hid beneath a less known name. The little theatre was each night assailed by crowds of anxious auditors, and the widow of Wych Street was the sorceress who attracted thousands of the king's liegemen, "by her so potent art." But a great point of her success was the novel practice of attending strictly to what may be termed the "*mise en scene*," or as the actor would say, the getting up of the piece in lieu of imitating other managers and representing the

drawing room of a modern mansion by a wretchedly daubed scene with a couple of rush-bottomed chairs; she took a bolder (and as it ultimately proved) a more successful flight. The floor was decked with carpet, mahogany or rosewood chairs were ranged along the walls, while pianos, sideboards and the numerous etceteras of a lady of fashion, and then what dinners! not the quarter of a pound of beef and penny buster of a cook's shop, but real right down chickens backed up with beakers of claret, and glorious bumpers of port; so much so indeed, that we ourselves have ofttimes longed to join the actors on the mimic scene and quaff from the beaker,

> "With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
> And purple stained mouth."

The plan succeeded and for three seasons she enjoyed a great share of public patronage chequered however by some disasters amongst which we may notice the defalcation of her brother-in-law and treasurer Mr. Anderson, her own bankruptcy and the subsequent superseding of the fiat. Here it was that she became acquainted with her present liege lord Mr. Charles Matthews the son of the lamented mimic of that name; he had just given up the mangement of the Adelphi where his success was anything but commensurate with his exertions. While conversing with her upon various topics, he one day expressed a wish to make an attempt on the boards, and Madame at once offered her theatre as the scene of his debut. "The old and young stager," was at once written for him. He appeared and was successful, for who could fail when urged on by the bright eyes of Madame and cheered by her applause? The final result may readily be guessed; on the one side was a lovely woman, ardent in temperament, radiant in charms, glowing with love; while on the other, we find a young man entering into life, and whom gratitude as well as passion urged to adore the divinity who had made his success.

They were married, the parish church of Kensington echoed these "*lovers vows*," the clerk gave away the "*fair penitent*," and within "*three weeks after marriage*," Madame and Charley took "*a flight to America*." Here for a time they were well received, but some vagabond Yankee having breathed the voice of slander against them, the sunshine of their career was soon overcast; Shakspeare says,

> "Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow;
> Thou shalt not avoid calumny."

And so true it was. The word was uttered, and the storm which nothing could quell was raised and burst above their

heads. At first it was a whisper, a light breeze, a gentle zephyr, scarcely perceptible, gliding as a still small voice gently o'er the ground till by degrees spreading around it came by a crafty entrance into the ears of those who afterwards were both her accusers and judges. Then at length flitting from place to place it swept along like the tempest, or the thunder-storm; anon, it rushed headlong spreading round with redoubled fury, or to use the words of Byron,

> "The foe, the fool, the jealous, and the vain,
> The envious who but but breathe in other pain;
> Behold the host delighting to deprave,
> Who track the steps of glory to the grave.
> Watch every fault that daring genius owes,
> Half to the ardour which its birth bestows,
> Distort the truth, accumulate the lie,
> And pile the pyramid of calumny."

Everything which could be done by her as a gentlewoman, was done; nay, she even "*stooped to conquer*," but it was no use. Madame and Charles were "*all in the wrong*," their "*honey moon*," was clouded by the storm of disapprobation; their "*lofty projects*" failed, and finding that this was not the way "*how to grow rich*" they resolved to sail "*for England-ho.*" To the Londoners however, this was an "agreeable surprise," for the little theatre—which by the way during her absence, had been anything but successful—was again an "*open house.*" Two seasons back Madame became the lessee of the Theatre Royal Covent Garden, while the same liberal management distinguished her as had hitherto made her name celebrated as a manager at the smaller house in Wych Street. Her success however was not as it should be, and she was compelled at the end of the season to yield the regions of government, into the hands of Mr. Charles Kemble, under whose auspices the theatre did next again unclose its doors.

We have with much trouble and assiduity collected as many amusing anecdotes of our heroine as we could depend upon. We are sensible there are many more floating on the stream of fashion and folly, but they are nearly all fictitious, and of a more dubious nature; and some so much to her discredit, we have at once rejected them as untrue.

In the history of such a sylph, who is driven to and fro like the gossamer or thistle-down, on the varying breeze of a May day, we may have been led into the same trifling mistakes; it is unavoidable, but they will be found very few, and our truths overbalancing them all. Our industry has been excited to the utmost, we have gleaned from every quarter our anecdotes of her

life, and have left nothing worth gathering; we trust we have kept our word, to give wit without indecency, intrigue free from disgust, and gay good-humour, void of offence.

Although we have had a moral end in view throughout, we leave it to be drawn by the reader as his fancy lists, convinced, that the young and the old of both sexes, the sage, and the coxcomb, the married man and the bachelor, the wife and the old maid, and her who is neither maid or wife, will experience the most pleasing sensations from cherishing in their heart's core this record of the striking virtues and amiable feelings of one of the most fascinating actresses that ever trod the London boards.

FINIS.

14 DAY USE
RETURN TO DESK FROM WHICH BORROWED
LOAN DEPT.
This book is due on the last date stamped below, or
on the date to which renewed.
Renewed books are subject to immediate recall.

30 May'65 S W

REC'D LD
JUN 1 '65 -5 PM

JUN 8 1979

REC. CIR. JUL 5 1979

AUG 12 2003

LD 21A-60m-3,'65
(F2336s10)476B

General Library
University of California
Berkeley